

ISLAM & RATIONALISM

Syed Kazim

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Acknowledgement

Saying thank you is more than good manners, it is good spirituality. Islam appreciates not only giving thanks to Allah (swt), but also demands us to thank people for their favours and kindness. Just like worship and praise is a requirement of being a slave of Allah (swt), so too is thanking a requirement of being a human. Islam orders people to worship and praise Allah (swt) and also to thank people for their favours. Thanking people is very important in Islam, as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once said, "He who does not thank people, does not thank Allah" (Ahmad & Tirmidhi).

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Syed Kazim

Preface

Today is the era of science and technology. If anyone wants to believe or follow something, they ask for proof either from a rational or scientific perspective. Today, even religion is not spared and every aspect of religion is questioned on the basis of rationalism. The use of a rational approach in every aspect of life is especially popular among the educated and intellectual class.

On the other hand, as Islam has become the fastest growing religion of the world, the enemies of Islam use various methods to give a wrong image of Islam to the general public. Especially, the process of creating a wrong image of Islam has increased drastically from the last 15 years, especially after the 9/11 incident in USA. Some of the methods adopted are to show that Muslims are terrorists, Muslims are uneducated, Islam subjugates women, Islam is an irrational religion and many more of this kind.

Among the various misconceptions about Islam, one of the biggest misconceptions which people have about Islam is that they feel that it is not a rational religion because it does not give a logical explanation to its various beliefs and actions. People also feel that Islam is not a rational religion as the Quran was revealed 1430 years back and all the principles, rules and regulations which it prescribes are outdated. But when we try to understand Islam deeply, we would realise that it is the most rational religion on the face of the earth, its principles are even rational and practical today and will be practical till the day of judgement.

A modern rational man, however, would never accept a religious scripture but would ask for visible proofs. This is because we live in an age, where human reason, logic and science are given importance. Thus, the book is written with an objective to present a rational argument on various aspects of beliefs, principles and actions of Islam and to remove the misconception that Islam is not a rational religion.

Introduction to Rationalism

Rationalism is the view that “regards reason as the chief source and test of knowledge” or “any view appealing to reason as a source of knowledge or justification”. Rationalism is the attitude of appealing to reason as fundamental justification of knowledge or beliefs. More formally, rationalism is defined as a methodology or a theory “in which the criterion of the truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive”. According to the Oxford Dictionary, rationalism is defined as, “The practice or principle of basing opinions and actions on reason and knowledge rather than on religious belief or emotional response”.

Rationalists believe reality has a logical structure. Because of this, rationalists argue that certain truths exist and that the intellect can directly grasp these truths. That is to say, rationalists assert that certain rational principles exist in logic, mathematics, ethics, and metaphysics that are so fundamentally true that denying them causes one to fall into contradiction. Rationalists have such a high confidence in reason that proof and physical evidence are unnecessary to ascertain the truth.

Rationalists believe that there is a reason that each object or phenomenon exists. An object comes back to the ground when thrown upwards not because a million people have observed so but because there is a reason for it to happen, which is ‘the law of gravity’. In addition, metal is a conductor because it facilitates movable electric charges, unlike wood. Rationalism tries to find the already existing general principles (man didn't create them) behind each phenomenon,

which are independent of each individual's perception of knowledge. The result is undisputed theories explaining the laws of the world surrounding us. Different degrees of emphasis on this method or theory lead to a range of rationalist standpoints, from the moderate position that reason has precedence over other ways of acquiring knowledge, to the more extreme position that reason is the unique path to knowledge.

Ever since the dawn of human life on this planet, man has always tried to understand Nature, his own place in the scheme of creation and the purpose of life itself. In this quest for truth, spanning many centuries and diverse civilizations, organized religion has shaped human life and, to a large extent, has determined the course of history. While some religions have been based on written text, claimed by their followers to be divinely inspired, others have relied solely on rationalism and human experience.

Although the words, faith and belief are sometimes incorrectly used as synonyms, faith refers to a particular type (or subset) of belief, as defined above. Broadly speaking, there are two categories of views regarding the relationship between faith and rationality:

- i. Rationalism holds that truth should be determined by reason and factual analysis, rather than faith, dogma, tradition or religious teaching.
 - ii. Fideism holds that faith is necessary, and that beliefs may be held without any evidence or reason and even in conflict with evidence and reason.
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Introduction to Islam

Islam is an Arabic word whose root words are Silm and Salam. Salam means "peace" and Silm means "submission". Thus, Islam means attaining peace through submission to God, the Creator of this universe. Islam is the name of the way of life given by the creator of the Universe, which governs all facets of life, such as moral, spiritual, physical, intellectual, social, economic, etc. This submission requires a fully conscious and willing effort to submit to the one Almighty God. One must consciously and conscientiously give oneself to the service of God. This means to act on what God enjoins all of us to do in the Quran and what Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged us to do. Thus, Muslims follow all the instructions given by Islam as he has a strong faith in God.

Muslim means anyone or anything that surrenders itself to the true will of God. By this, everything existing nature (trees, animals, planets, etc.) are Muslims because they are in a state of surrender to God's will. In other words, they are fulfilling the purpose for which God created them.

As many think, Islam is not a new religion. It was not founded by Prophet Mohammed (peace be on him). Islam is the way of life given by God, our Creator, to the first man Adam and to all of us who came after him. This can be well understood from the fact that all the Prophets sent by God like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Solomon, David, Jesus, etc (peace be on them all) taught the same way of life which was

to surrender, obey, submit and be sincere to God Almighty. We call this way of life as Islam in Arabic.

As many think, Allah is not a Muslim God. Allah is the Arabic name for God Almighty who created everything, including you and me. Even the Arab speaking Jews and Christians use the word "Allah" to refer to God.

Islam guides people through the Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Quran is the final word of God which was revealed for the entire mankind. It is a book which contains not flaws or contradictions, and has not been altered since its revelation. The life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), especially his 23 years of Prophethood is the best example for the entire mankind. These two sources combined will give the complete and true concept of Islam. Other than this, Islam encourages people to seek knowledge from resources which are helpful for mankind.

Rationalism in Quran

In order to communicate its message, the Quran uses two ways to address mankind; through emotions and through rational argument. The first approach appeals the heart and the second approach appeals the intellect or reason. According to scientists estimation there are 8.7 million species on the planet earth. Among all these species, human beings are made superior among all the creatures; they are the only one with common sense and with ability to reason. So, in order to appeal man through his ability, reasoning is important.

Now we shall see how the Quran promotes and encourages rationalism. When we read the Quran, we can see how it confirms the authority of being rational. The following are the various verses from the Quran which encourage rational thinking:

1. Signs for People

- i. God says in the Quran, *"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alteration of the night and the day, and the (great) ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what God has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every (kind of) moving creature, and (His) direction of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and earth are signs for a people who use reason"*

(Quran 2:164).

Explanation: The verse inspires the readers of the Quran to observe and study the phenomena of nature, which indeed are the signs of the Creator. That is to say, rather than blind faith, it is an informed faith strengthened by experimental evidence and reasoning that God urges people to have. Thus, the Quran demands the people to look around them and think rationally.

- ii. God says in the Quran, "*O People of the Scripture, why do you argue about Abraham while the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after him? Then will you not reason?*" (Quran 3:65).

Explanation: When the Jews, Christians and Polytheists claim that Ibrahim (peace be upon him) belonged to their religion, the verse is presenting a rational argument in front of them by saying that Judaism and Christianity came into being centuries after Ibrahim (as), then how can Ibrahim (as) be a Jew or a Christian? It is obvious that it is the talk of ignorance. Similarly the polytheistic religion of the people of Mecca is also an invented religion of a period long after Prophet Ibrahim (as). Thus, the verse is asking to people to reason on the same.

- iii. God says in the Quran, "*And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; but the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear God, so will you not reason?*" (Quran 6:32).

Explanation: The verse states that one needs to reason on the worldly life and the hereafter, as giving preference to the world over the hereafter is not wise and is an outcome of not reasoning.

- iv. God says in the Quran, "*And We have certainly created Hell for many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not*

understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like cattle; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless" (Quran 7:179).

Explanation: As far as the eyes, ears and hearts are concerned, both the animals and humans have them, but the same faculty of sight, hearing and understanding as granted to humans is not possessed by the animals. This is a great distinguishing feature between the two and because of this man is superior to animals. But those humans, who do not use these faculties, bring themselves to the level of the animals, even to the lowest level, because to the animals these higher faculties have not been granted. These are the people who do not know who has sent them to this world, why have they been sent and where are they to go. How astonishing is this neglect of the great thinkers of the world about their own existence and the purpose of their life. Thus, Islam demands people to use their sense organs in the way they are supposed to use it. The humans who possess these faculties and yet do not use them correctly and throw themselves to a level lower than that of the animals are worse than the animals.

- v. God says in the Quran, *"O my people, I do not ask you for it (i.e., my advice) any reward. My reward is only from the one who created me. Then will you not reason?" (Quran 11:51).*

The verse states that Prophet Hud (peace be upon him) did not want anything in return for the advice and guidance which he is offering to the people, but he asked people to reason.

There are more than 200 verses in the Quran which end with the statement, "Will you not Reason". Some important verses which talk about reason are 3:118, 3:190, 6:50, 10:16, 16:12, 28:60, 29:35, 35:27-28, 36:68, 37:137-138, 38:29, 45:5 and 47:24.

2. Asking for Proof

- i. God says in the Quran, "...Say, *Produce your proof, if you are truthful*" (Quran 2:111).

Explanation: In this verse, the Quran is making a statement which is asking people to bring a proof, if they are truthful. This shows that when someone is telling something, it should be backed by proof and just merely saying something would not be accepted. This can only be understood that the Quran endorses on the authority of reason.

- ii. Allah says in the Quran, "*Is He (not best) who begins creation and then repeats it and who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Say, "Produce your proof, if you should be truthful"*" (Quran 27:64).

Explanation: The verse is telling people to bring a proof if they are claiming something to be right, as just saying something to be right or wrong cannot be accepted. Thus, this verse is demanding people to be very much rational, practical and proof oriented in their approach, and this can only happen when one speaks with strong evidence.

3. Discouraging Blind Following

- i. God says in the Quran, "*And when it is said to them, "Follow what God has revealed," they say, "Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing."* Even though their fathers

understood nothing, nor were they guided?"
(Quran 2:170).

Explanation: The verse says that the general reason what people give when they are asked to think is that they will only follow what their forefathers have been doing.

ii. God says in the Quran, *"The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries (i.e., cattle or sheep) – deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand"* (Quran 2:171).

Explanation: The verse states that the people who do not think are like people who are deaf, dumb and blind.

iii. God says in the Quran, *"Thus does God make clear to you His verses (i.e., laws) that you might use reason"* (Quran 2:242).

Explanation: The verse states that the reason why God has made his commandments clear so that man can reason on them.

iv. God says in the Quran, *"Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of God are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason"* (Quran 8:22).

Explanation: It is obvious that the Quran does not mean the physically deaf and dumb, but those who do not want to listen to truth, or those who, when they hear, do not wish to admit it with their tongues. In the view of the Quran, the ears which are unable to listen to truth and which are only used for listening to illogical and nonsensical things are deaf. The tongue which is merely used to utter nonsense is dumb. The people, who do not reason, are those who do not make use of their intellect and their faculty of thought. Such are not fit to be called human beings.

- v. God says in the Quran, *"We have certainly sent down to you a Book (i.e., the Quran) in which is your mention. Then will you not reason? (Quran 21:10).*

Explanation: The verse says that God has sent the Quran which speaks about the creation, nature, responsibility, trials and the return of man, so that man can understand all this and reason on it.

The above mentioned verses are not the only verses which discourage people from blind following, but there are many more verses, such as 5:104, 7:169, 10:42, 11:24, 21:67, 23:68, 25:44, 25:73, 29:43, 38:29, 47:24 and 67:10).

4. Quran Using Rational Argument

- i. God says in the Quran, *"Had there been within them (i.e., the heavens and earth) gods besides God, they both would have been ruined...." (Quran 21:22).*

Explanation: The verse itself uses a rational argument to prove the oneness of God. The verse appeals to the minds of the people asking them to think and reason. This clearly shows that the Quran uses rational arguments in order to prove its point.

- ii. God says in the Quran, *"O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create (as much as) a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a (tiny) thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued" (Quran 22:73).*

Explanation: This verse presents one of the best rational arguments of the Quran. The verse says that the false gods which these people are worshipping,

come to create a fly they will not be able to create it, it also continues to state that a fly takes away something from these false gods, they even do not have the power to get it back. This rational argument presented by the Quran, demands people to think from a logical frame of mind.

- iii. God says in the Quran, *"...Indeed, God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves..." (Quran 13:11).*

Explanation: The Quran intends to say that, although all destinies depend on the Will of God. The destinies of societies also change according to their intrinsic system of functioning. God does not extravagantly alter the destiny of a nation without any specific reason, unless they themselves bring about a major change in their system of social and moral values and their manner of performing their individual duties. This law is honoured by the Quran and is also employed by it. Despite the fact that His words transcends the limitations of connection, the Quran is not oblivious of pointing out to the system of connection operating in the universe; it views all phenomena and events as being subservient to this system.

- iv. God says in the Quran, *"And how many a city did We destroy while it was committing wrong, so it is (now) fallen into ruin and (how many) an abandoned will and (how many) a lofty palace. So have they not travelled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear?..." (Quran 22:45-46).*

Explanation: From this verse, we can learn that God wants people to reason by studying the conditions and circumstances of societies of the past and to take

lesson from their history. It is evident that if the destinies races and nations were random, or dependent upon accidents, or were prescribed from above, the advice to study and draw a lesson would not have any sense. By laying emphasis on it, the Quran intends to remind us that a uniform system of laws governs the destinies of all the nations of the world. It also reminds us that if the conditions of a society in which we live, are similar to the conditions prevalent in a society of the past, the same fate awaits us too. We can also infer that the affirmation of the law of connection and the approval of the cause-and-effect relationship, imply the acceptance of authority of rationality.

5. Result of Not Being Rational

- i. God says in the Quran, *"And it is not for a soul (i.e., anyone) to believe except by permission of Allah, and He will place defilement upon those who will not use reason"* (Quran 10:100).

Explanation: The Quran in this verse invites us to be rational. The verse clearly states that the people who do not reason, God will place on them with filth, wrath or punishment and they would be in confusion and error.

- ii. God says in the Quran, *"And he had already led astray from among you much of creation, so did you not use reason?"* (Quran 36:62).

Explanation: The verse is demanding the people to use their reasoning ability and see that a large number of people have followed the Satan, and on his bidding have made other beings as their deities. Thus, they have lost the path of guidance and they have become transgressors.

There are many more verses in the Quran which ask people to reason by relating to the creation of God which is around us. It is one of the most significant, logical and common examples which every person can easily relate to. Greatness of creating indicates greatness of action and the perfection of creating indicates the perfection of actions, and there is always a harmony between the perfection of creation and the perfection of actions. The universe is a reflection of the perfection of creating; hence its Creator should be perfect in His actions.

There are more than one thousand verses in the Quran which speak about nature and its working and in these verses human beings are asked to pause, see, ponder, reflect and think rationally. From all these verses we can conclude that, Islam encourages people to behave rationally and it does not want its followers to blindly believe anything what is said, but one is always motivated to see, reflect and think.

The Quran, notwithstanding the transcendental nature of Divine commandments, clarifies fully their worldly and terrestrial relevance, and asks men to cogitate upon their rationale until their meaning becomes explicit, so that it may not be imagined that these laws are based on a series of occult notions beyond the power of human comprehension.

Out of all the religious scriptures which exist in the world today, there is no scripture which gives importance to reasoning, the way Quran gives. The word reason (aqal) appears not less than 49 times in the Quran. Wherever the word is used in the Quran, it is mentioned as an ongoing activity.

God has also used the terminology of 'men of understanding' in the Quran. Quran mentions this

terminology not less than 16 times. The Quran states that there are a lot of signs hidden for the men of understanding. In all these places the Quran has used this in a positive manner. Thus, we can learn that the Quran motivates people to think and reason on the Quran.

The Quran has framed a conditional proposition, which exempts or excludes the originator premise for arriving at a conclusion which is consequent upon it. Thus, the Quran aims at emphasizing the role of rationalism and refutes the view of some of the religions that faith is alien to, or, is incompatible with rationalism, and that to embrace faith one has to suspend his rational faculty and concentrate upon heart alone, so that it may absorb the Divine light and become illuminated by it. This view is totally negated and refuted by the Quran.

Rationalism in the Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) throughout his life was very rational. He used rationality while conveying the message, while answering questions, while resolving disputes, etc. During the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) all wise and reasonable people at that time testify to the eligibility of this message which the Prophet (peace be upon him) propagated. We can come across various incidence from the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) where he (pbuh) had adopted a rational approach. They are as follows:

1. Once Prophet (peace be upon him) asked Muadh ibn Jabal (ra), whom he had names as a judge in the new environment of Yemen, "Through what will you judge?" Muadh (ra) replied, "Through the Book of Allah". Prophet (pbuh) then asked, "And if you find nothing in the Book of Allah?", Muadh (ra) went on to say, "I shall judge according to the tradition of Allah's Messenger". Prophet (pbuh) further asked, "And if you find nothing in the Messenger's tradition?", Muadh (ra) answered confidently, "I shall not fail to make an effort to reach an opinion". This answer satisfied the Prophet (pbuh), who concluded, "Praise be to Allah, who has guided His Messenger's messenger to what satisfied Allah's Messenger" (At-Tirmidhi, An-Nisai and Abu Dawood). The hadith states that, when a person wants to take a decision

and is not able to find any kind of reference from the Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) then one should exert utmost power and effort to take a decision, which means that one should use his intellectual and reasoning ability to arrive at an answer. This shows that Prophet (peace be upon him) supported the use of ability to reason to take decisions.

2. Once a Bedouin came to Prophet (peace be upon him) and left after the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught him Islamic orders and prohibitions, so the Bedouin converted to Islam. Then his kindred asked him, "How could you tell that he is a messenger of God?" to which the Bedouin answered, "Muhammad (peace be upon him) didn't order anything to which my reasoning asked me not to do it, and he didn't prohibit anything to which my reasoning asked me to do it". This instance clearly shows that whatever Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke was rational enough for people to believe and accept.
3. Once Farrah ibn Hubairah came to Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, "We used to worship idols and goddesses instead of worshiping God the Almighty, we invoked them, yet they didn't respond to us, we asked them, yet they didn't answer us, till we came to you and were guided to God through you, so we worship God now". To which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "He who is blessed with reasoning will prosper". Thus, from this it is clear that one should reason if he has to attain the truth.
4. Once a young man came to the Prophet (pbuh) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, give me permission

to commit zina (unlawful sexual relations)". The people turned to him to rebuke him, saying "Shhuu". The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Come here", so he came close to him and he told him to sit down. He (pbuh) said, "Would you like that for your mother?" He said, "No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you". He (pbuh) said, "Nor do people like it for their mothers". He (pbuh) said, "Would you like it for your daughter?" He said, "No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you". He (pbuh) said, "Nor do people like it for their daughters". He (pbuh) said, "Would you like it for your sister?" He said, "No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you." He (pbuh) said, "Nor do people like it for their sisters." He (pbuh) said, "Would you like it for your paternal aunt?" He said, "No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you". He (pbuh) said, "Nor do people like it for their paternal aunts". He (pbuh) said, "Would you like it for your maternal aunt?" He said, "No, by Allah, may I be sacrificed for you". He (pbuh) said, "Nor do people like it for their maternal aunts". Then he (pbuh) placed his hand on him and said, "O Allah, forgive his sin, purify his heart, and guard his chastity", and after that, this young man never did anything (Ahmed). From this we can see that Prophet (peace be upon him) did not use any verse from the Quran to motivate him to stop the wrong act but did so with a rational argument.

5. Hussain (father of Imran ibn Hussain) used to worship seven idols before Islam considering them Gods, and he was a notable man in Quraish. So some people came to him and told him to talk to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as he

was putting down his idols and cursed them. Hussain went to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and asked him, "We overheard that you are cursing our idols". To which the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "O Hussain, how many idols do you worship?" He said, "Seven on earth and one in the heaven, which makes it eight". The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked, "If you were in hardship, whom do you call?" He said, "I call the one in heavens". The Prophet (peace be upon him) again asked, "If you are broken, whom do you call?" He said, "The one in the heavens". The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "How come you worship those idols with the only one who responds to your supplication? Do you thank Him yet worship others with Him? Do you thank Him and fear your people?" to which Hussain said, "None of those two". The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Convert to Islam to be safe", and later Hussain accepted Islam before leaving the assembly. This shows how Prophet (peace be upon him) used a rational approach to speak with the idol worshipper and invited him to worship the one true God.

6. The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Ibn Al-Hadrami to Munzer bin Sawa with his letter asking him to embrace Islam. Al-Hadrami came to the king, listened to his words and told him, "O, Munzer you have an open mind, so don't be among the closed mind people in the hereafter". This means that your mind should guide you to Islam otherwise your mind is considered among closed mind people in the hereafter. One of the main aspects of rationalism is thinking with an

open mind and when Islam presented to mankind, he is asked to reason with an open mind so that he can be successful in the hereafter.

All these instances show us that Prophet (peace be upon him) was a very much a rational person. Wherever necessary he (peace be upon him) used the verses of the Quran, wherever necessary he (peace be upon him) used his character and wherever necessary he (peace be upon him) used a rational argument. Thus, being rational is a part of Prophet's (peace be upon him) life.

Rationalism in the Teachings of Other Prophets

1. Noah (peace be upon him)

Allah in His Mercy sent His messenger Noah to guide his people. Noah was an excellent speaker and a very patient man. He pointed out to his people the mysteries of life and the wonders of the universe. He pointed out how the night is regularly followed by the day and that the balances between these opposites were designed by Allah the Almighty for our good. The night gives coolness and rest while the day gives warmth and awakens activity. The sun encourages growth, keeping all plants and animals alive, while the moon and stars assist in the reckoning of time, direction and seasons. He pointed out that the ownership of the heavens and the earth belongs only to the Divine Creator. Therefore, he explained to this people, there cannot have been more than one deity. He clarified to them how the devil had deceived them for so long and that the time had come for this deceit to stop. Noah spoke to them of Allah's glorification of man, how He had created him and provided him with sustenance and the blessings of a mind. He told them that idol worshipping was a suffocating injustice to the mind. He warned them not to worship anyone but Allah and described the terrible punishment Allah would mete out if they continued in their evil ways (Stories of the Prophets by Ibn Kathir).

2. Abraham (peace be upon him)

From the communication of Abraham (peace be upon him) which is recorded in the Quran, we can learn that he has also used rational arguments to his people, to convey his message. There are two situations to prove the same:

a. With the Family

God says in the Quran, “(Mention) when he said to his father, “O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear and does not see and will not benefit you at all?” (Quran 19:42). God also says in the Quran, “When he said to his father and his people, “What do you worship?” They said, “We worship idols and remain to them devoted.” He said, “Do they hear you when you supplicate? Or do they benefit you, or do they harm?” (Quran 26:70-73).

This is a communication of Abraham (peace be upon him) which is recorded in the Quran. The most amazed and furious was his father (or his uncle who had raised him), for as it is well known, he not only worshipped idols but sculpted and sold them as well. Abraham (peace be upon him) felt that it was his duty as a good son to advise his father with rational arguments against this evil so that he could be saved from Allah’s punishment. Being a wise son he did not make his father feel foolish, nor did he openly laugh at his conduct. He told him that he loved him, thereby hoping to generate fatherly love. Then he gently asked him why he worshipped lifeless idols who were neither able to hear nor see him, then how could that god benefit him or harm him. This shows that Abraham (peace be upon him) used a rational approach while speaking with his father.

b. With the People

God says in the Quran, "So when the night covered him (with darkness), he saw a star. He said, "This is my lord." But when it set, he said, "I like not those that disappear." And when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my lord." But when it set, he said, "Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray." And when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my lord; this is greater." But when it set, he said, "O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah." (Quran 6:76-79). God also says in the Quran, "And of His signs are the night and day and the sun and moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or to the moon, but prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it should be Him that you worship" (Quran 41:37).

In the first and second of verses Abraham (peace be upon him) clarified to his people that these celestial bodies do not serve as deities and cannot be worshipped as partners with Allah. Indeed these bodies are created things, fashioned, controlled, managed and made to serve. They appear sometimes and disappear at others, going out of sight from our world. However, Allah (swt) does not lose sight of anything, and nothing can be hidden from Him. He is without end, everlasting without disappearance and here is no other deity but Allah (swt).

In the next set of verse, we learn that Abraham (peace be upon him) made clear to them, first that the celestial bodies are unworthy of worship and second that they are among the signs of Allah. The reasoning

of Abraham (peace be upon him) helped to reveal the truth, and then the conflict between him and his people began for the worshippers of the stars and planets. These verses show that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) gave logical explanation to people as to how the star, moon and the sun cannot be God.

c. With the Religious Leaders

When everyone went to the other side of the river for a grand celebration, Abraham (peace be upon him) went to the temple with a sharp axe. He then raised his axe and started smashing the false gods worshipped by the people. He destroyed them all except one on whose neck he hung the axe. After this his anger subsides and he felt at peace. He left the temple. He had fulfilled his vow to show his people a practical proof of their foolishness in worshipping something other than Allah (swt).

When the priests returned to the temple from the celebration, they were shocked to see their gods smashed to pieces, lying scattered all over the temple. They began to guess who had done that to their idols and Abraham's name came to their minds. Then the priests called him and asked him whether he was responsible for breaking the idols. To which Abraham (peace be upon him) responded saying, "... Rather, this, the largest of them, did it, so ask them if they should (be able to) speak" (Quran 21:63).

The communication of Abraham (peace be upon him) which is recorded in the Quran, helps us to learn how Abraham (peace be upon him) adopted a rational approach while conveying the message of Islam to the priests by asking them to ask the biggest idol which was not broken. He (peace be upon him) told them that

he must be the culprit. They replied that he knew well that the idol could not speak or move. They realized the senselessness of their beliefs; however, their arrogance would not allow them to admit their foolishness.

This gave Abraham (peace be upon him) a chance to prove the foolishness of worshipping these lifeless objects. To which Abraham (peace be upon him) said, "... Do you worship that which you (yourself) carve, While Allah created you and that which you do" (Quran 37:95-96). These verses also show us as to how Abraham (peace be upon him) used a rational argument to tell the priest that how they could worship the idols which they have carved themselves.

d. With the Ruler

God says in the Quran, "Have you not considered the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord (merely) because God had given him kingship? When Abraham said, "My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death," he said, "I give life and cause death." Abraham said, "Indeed, God brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west." So the disbeliever was overwhelmed (by astonishment), and God does not guide the wrongdoing people" (Quran 2:258).

Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) confronted with the king of Iraq called Namrud, who also called himself God. After Abraham (peace be upon him) came out of the fire unharmed, a large part of the society started believing in God and he being a prophet of God. After this the king felt that his throne was in danger, and that he was losing power. Seeing this situation, Namrud wanted to debate with Abraham

(peace be upon him) to show his people that he was God and Abraham (peace be upon him) was a liar. Namrud asked Abraham (peace be upon him) "What can your God do that I cannot?" Abraham (peace be upon him) replied, "My Lord is He who gives life and death". Namrud then shouted, "I also give life and death". He immediately ordered an innocent person to be killed by the royal executioner. Then he freed a prisoner who was on death row. He turned his attention to Abraham (peace be upon him) and said, "Did you see how I can also give life and death?" Seeing this, Abraham (peace be upon him) said, "My Lord makes the sun rise from the East. Can you make it rise from the West?" Namrud was confounded. He was beaten at his own game, on his own territory and in front of his own people. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) left him there speechless and went back to continue his mission. This incident shows how Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) used a rational approach while speaking with Namrud.

These instances help us understand that not only Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a rational person but also other prophets like Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) were a rational persons and he used this rationality to call people to the ultimate truth and achieve his mission.

Rationalism in Belief

1. Existence of God

God is the creator and sustainer of the entire universe. Today majority of the world also believes in God. God says in the Quran, "And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and earth. All are to Him devoutly obedient" (Quran 30:26).

i. Definition of God: For a person to say there is no God, he should know what the meaning of God is. If I hold a book and say that 'this is a pen', for the opposite person to say, 'it is not a pen', he should know what the definition of a pen is, even if he does not know nor is able to recognise or identify the object I am holding in my hand. For him to say this is not a pen, he should at least know what a pen means. Similarly for an atheist to say 'there is no God', he should at least know the concept of God. His concept of God would be derived from the surroundings in which he lives. The God that a large number of people worship has got human qualities, therefore he does not believe in such a God. Similarly a Muslim too does not and should not believe in such false Gods.

The word God has different meanings with different understandings depending on the language, faith, philosophy, and the culture we represent. For some, anyone who helps them in need is their God, and for some, their parents are their Gods, for some; popular and successful human beings become their God, for others money is their God, and for some the natural elements are Gods, and for some anything and everything is God.

It is indeed very easy to understand the correct meaning of God. For example, if you are asked, who is a mother? Your obvious answer will be: One who gives birth to a child. We may address Mother Teresa as 'mother'. However, it does not give Mother Teresa the same status as our real mother. We don't have the choice to choose someone to be our mother; our mother is the one who gave birth to us.

Similarly, God is the One who created us and this whole universe. We may call anyone, or anything as God, but nothing can be our "true God" except the One who created us and the entire universe. We don't have the choice to choose someone we like, to be our God. The one who created us alone can be God. None of God's creation, regardless of how great the creation is, can ever be God.

ii. Our Existence: Many people have been brought up more on science than religion, and to believe in evolution more than a creator. Let us analyze if we have a creator. When you see a bridge, a building or an automobile, you will not deny that it has a maker, a person or a company behind its existence.

What about the human body with its massive and intricate control systems? Think about the brain: how it thinks, functions, analyzes, retrieves, stores, distinguishes and categorizes information in a millionth of a second, all of this instantly. (And don't forget the fact that you are using your brain to read this too!). Think about the heart. Think about how it pumps continuously and maintains steady precision throughout the life of the person. Think about the kidneys and the liver and the various functions they perform. The purifying instruments of the body perform hundreds of chemical analysis simultaneously

and also control the level of toxicity in the body. Think about your eyes, the human cameras that adjust, focus, interpret, evaluate and discern colour automatically, naturally receiving and adjusting to light and distance.

Can random mutation or evolution develop these intricate systems? Can this design come about by itself? For example, throwing paint of different colours on the wall randomly might create some design like a hand or a bird, but it can never create Mona Lisa! The design in our body is much more complex and intricate than Mona Lisa. How rational is it to believe that this design came into existence without a designer?

iii. Order in the Universe: Our planet earth is one of the several planets in our solar system, and our solar system is one of the several such solar systems in our galaxy. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is one of the several galaxies present in the universe. Scientists say that there are thousands of galaxies in the universe. We can observe an excellent order and precision in the universe. To give an example, solar and lunar eclipses are calculated well in advance. It is possible to calculate the time of sun-rise and sun-set for the next hundreds of years. These things are possible because of the synchronization, balance and harmony that exist amongst the planets and stars in the universe. This is a wonderful example for the presence of excellent design and a set pattern in the universe.

Did this beautiful and perfect design come into existence by chance or by a mere explosion? Let us consider an example for things to happen by chance. Ten marbles numbered 1 to 10 and of different colours are put in a bag and the bag is shaken violently to mix the marbles up. Then, closing your eyes, you try to pull out the marbles in order of 1 to 10. What are the

chances of pulling out the marbles in that order? It is twenty six million to one (26,000,000 to 1) and this is just for 10 marbles. What is the probability for the millions of stars and planets to come together with the exact precision, synchronization and orchestration by chance? The answer is zero. This shows that it is not rational to deny the existence of a Creator for this grand universe.

When we reflect upon the nature of our world, we see order everywhere from the water cycle to the movement of the earth around the sun. Commenting on the order found in the universe, the physicist Stephen Hawking explains that, "The overwhelming impression 'is one of order, the more we discover about the universe, the more we find that it is governed by rational laws.'" This observation is shared by the vast majority of scientists. Since the universe has order and is governed by the 'laws of science', we should question how this order came about. The most effective way to answer this question is to reason to the best conclusion.

Take your mobile phone for example; your phone is made of glass, plastic and metal. Glass comes from sand, plastic comes from oil, and metal is extracted from the ground. Imagine you were walking in a desert (where there is lots of oil, sand and metals in the ground), and you found a mobile phone lying around. Would you believe that it came together by itself? That the sun shone, the wind blew, lightning struck, the oil bubbled to the surface and mixed with the sand and metal, and over millions of years the mobile came together by chance?

No one would believe such an explanation. A mobile phone is clearly something that was put

together in an organised way, so it would be rational to believe that it must have an organiser. In the same way, when we see the order in the universe, isn't it rational to say that the universe has an organiser? This 'organiser' is best explained by the existence of God. God is the one who brought about the order in the universe.

iv. Beginning of the Universe: If something has always existed it doesn't need a creator. In the first part of the 20th century some physicists held the view that the universe had always existed. If the universe had always existed it wouldn't need a creator. However, according to Cosmology, the universe had a beginning some 14 billion years ago with a cosmic event commonly known as the 'Big Bang'.

Imagine you heard a loud bang, and you asked 'where did that sound come from?' Would you be satisfied with the answer that it came from 'nothing' and it 'just happened?', of course not. You would say 'what was the cause of that loud bang?' In the same way, rationally the 'Big Bang' must also have a cause that brought it about. Now we can ask since the 'Big Bang' has a cause, what was the cause of that cause? Then we can ask, what was the cause of that cause? And so on and so forth. But this can't go on forever and must end with a first cause, because of the following example:

Imagine a sniper who has just found his target and calls back to base to get permission to shoot. The person at the base tells the sniper to hold on while they seek permission from someone else higher up. So the guy higher up seeks permission from the guy even higher up and so on and so on. If this goes on forever, will the sniper ever get to shoot the target?

The obvious answer is that he wouldn't be able to shoot. The only way the sniper can shoot is if someone gives permission without asking for anyone else's permission. That person would be the first cause of the sniper shooting. In the same way, the Big Bang must have a first cause.

We can conclude that this first cause must be powerful as it brought the whole universe into existence, and it must be intelligent as it caused the 'laws of science' which govern the universe. Also, this first cause must be timeless, space-less and immaterial, because time, space and matter began at the 'Big Bang'. Finally, since it is uncaused it must have always existed. All of these attributes of the first cause make up the basic concept of God. God is the uncreated first cause of the universe.

v. Human Nature: Throughout the history of the world, the majority of people have believed in God. There seems to be something built in a the human that makes us want to believe. Over the last decade some really startling facts have been found that show that children have an innate belief in God. Dr. Justin Barrett, a senior researcher at the University of Oxford Centre for Anthropology and Mind, states:

"The preponderance of scientific evidence for the past 10 years or so has shown that a lot more seems to be built into the natural development of children's minds than we once thought, including a predisposition to see the natural world as designed and purposeful and that some kind of intelligent being is behind that purpose..."

He adds that "If we threw a handful (of children) on an island and they raised themselves... they would believe in God". To put it simply, his answer as to why

anyone would believe in God is that, our minds are designed to do so. Disbelief in God is something which is unnatural to the human being. Oxford University development psychologist Dr. Olivera Petrovich, who is an expert in the Psychology of Religion states that, belief in God develops naturally and that "atheism is definitely an acquired position".

So where did this natural belief in a creator come from? We can't say it is taught by society as this belief is innate, and studies show that it is independent of societal pressures and is cross cultural. The best explanation for this belief is that God has put this into humanity.

All these rational examples help us belief and understand that God does exist. From this we can also conclude that the belief in God is not only rational but it is also part of human nature.

vi. Who Created the Creator: According to Cosmology the universe had a beginning some 14 billion years ago with a cosmic event commonly known as the 'Big Bang'. Along with the beginning of universe, time - the factor we use to measure beginning and end, also came into existence. All things created in this world are dependent on time; they all have a birth (beginning) and death (end). The Creator who created the universe was present even before time came into existence and is hence Independent of it. Hence the Creator can neither have a beginning nor an end and has always existed. Think about the booklet you are reading right now. If this booklet had always existed it wouldn't need a Creator or an author.

2. Characteristics of God

Everything in the world has some or the other characteristics. Similarly, God also has certain characteristics. Understanding the true characteristics of God will help a person to develop a correct concept of God. God introduces himself in the Quran. God says in the Quran, “Say, “He is God (who is) One, God, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent” (Quran 112:1-4).

Some of the characteristics of God are as follows:

- God is only one
- God is not in need of anything or God is free of wants
- God does not have parents, wife or children
- There is none equal to God in all His attributes like power, knowledge, wisdom, forgiveness, etc.
- God does not get tired
- God does not forget
- God does not make mistakes
- God loves all humans and does not differentiate on the basis of caste, colour, race or descent (vamsha/khandan).

i. Can God be in need of anything? Can God have Wife or Children? Can God have Parents?

If God is in need of something, there should be someone to fulfill the needs of God. This would mean that the person who fulfills God's needs has something that God does not have and God becomes incomplete without that person. For example, we need a spouse because we are in need of a companion. If God has a wife, it would mean that He has needs and thus requires a wife to satisfy Him. This makes God needy and dependent on His spouse and God being in need of

anything goes against the very nature of God. Hence, God cannot have a wife.

If God has no wife, then He cannot have any children. If God has parents, then it would mean that He did not exist before He was born. This would mean that God did not exist at one point and this is impossible as it goes against the definition of God. Therefore, God cannot have parents.

ii. Can God get Tired? Can God Forget or make Mistakes?

God is the All Powerful. Hence He cannot get tired. God is the All Knower. Hence He cannot make mistakes or forget.

iii. Can there be anyone Equal to God?

If there is anyone equal to God, then that person can also claim to be God and this would make more than one God, which is impossible and irrational as we have seen above.

3. Monotheism

Nature's greatest truth, the supreme truth of this cosmos, is that the Creator and Organizer of the universe and its creatures is the One and only One Master, One God. God also says in the Quran, "And your god is one God. There is no deity (worthy of worship) except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful" (Quran 2: 163). God also says in the Quran, "In the heavens and the earth if there were other Gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both. But Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne (High is He) above whatever they associate with Him" (Quran 21:22).

He is sole and singular in all His qualities. None else is His associate or partner in creating and managing this world, in creating all creatures and in giving them life and death. He is a Power who is Omni-present, Omniscient. He hears all, sees all. Even a leaf does not move without his permission. Every man's soul, inner being, acknowledges this. Be he a believer in One God or a worshipper of idols, he surely knows deep down within him and believes that the Nourished and the Real Master is but 'One' only.

Some people believe that there is more than one Creator or God for this world or at the very least they argue that there is One God along with several other demi-Gods (Devataas). This philosophy is called "Polytheism". Let us do a careful examination of this particular belief system with the help of various scenarios.

i. Scenario 1: A person's intellect too refuses to accept anything other than this that the world's Master and Creator is One. The logic is plain. Take the case of the school which has two Principals or a village having two Heads. They cannot function at all. Their functioning is disrupted and in turmoil. For that matter, a nation too cannot have two kings or two Presidents or Prime Ministers. How, then, can the affairs of such a vast universe be managed by more than One God or by many masters? How, then, can there be many directors and managers of the world?

Generalizing this scenario, we will get millions of gods executing a single task which can easily be done by just one God. So, mutually agreeing gods cannot exist as one God is sufficient to execute the task. This in philosophy is termed as Occam's razor which says

that 'Objects or things should not be multiplied beyond necessity'.

ii. Scenario 2: Had there been many Gods, the scenario would have been something like this; one God would order that night should set in but another God would insist that it should be day time. One God would decide that the span of a day would be six months while another would decide differently. Yet another God would want the sun to rise in the west but one of the Gods would disagree and say, "No, the sun will rise in the east". Had there many Gods sharing the One Supreme God's powers, decisions and management, then again the scene would be somewhat like this; a man would pray to the rain God for rains. The rain God would accept his supplication. But, suddenly, another God would disagree and would command that there will be no rain. Then, the subordinate rain God would go on strike in protest. Meanwhile, the people would be waiting for day break but it would turn out that the sun God was on strike.

When we generalize this scenario, we will get millions of gods disagreeing on several issues ranging from creation of Universe to rainfall on a particular day. If there were really so many gods, then this Universe would never have existed in such a perfect order as it does today.

iii. Scenario 3: Let us say three people go for a job interview. There is just one vacancy for the job. Each of the three persons worships their own God with sincerity and asks his God for the job. If we assume that there is more than one God, then each God would want to grant the job to the person who worshipped it. We have just one vacancy with three people expecting the job and three gods trying to give the job to their

worshipper. Will anyone ever get a job? A trivial thing like this will trigger a fight amongst gods. There are billions of things happening in this world and they all require the approval of God. The whole universe will be full of chaos if we have more than one God.

The farthest the Polytheist can go on this issue is to claim that all the other gods will submit to or accept the choice or will of One God. If this is the case, then naturally all those several "so called gods" are not gods as they do not possess their own choice but they in fact submit to the will of the One True supreme God. Hence, they all are not gods but servants of the One True God.

The plain and sober truth is that everything in the universe and its harmonious, organized functioning, speaks for itself and testifies to the fact that there is One and only One Master of this universe. He can do, at one command, whatever He wishes anytime, anywhere. He can neither be visualized in imagination or thoughts nor can he be depicted in images. He created the heavens and the earth, the entire cosmos only to put them at the service of mankind. The sun serves us. The winds serve us. This earth too is at our disposal. Fire, water and all inanimate and animate creation, apart from our own species, of course, have seen daylight only to be put to our service and use. God crowned man as the chief and leader of all these things and created him as His slave only, to worship and obey Him. The existence of this universe and the perfect order that is in place is an undeniable and an irrefutable evidence of the fact that there is only One Supreme God for this world, Who is regulating all the affairs of the world. Thus, rationally we can conclude

that there is only one God who is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire Universe.

4. Prohibition of Idol Worship

There are a number of people in the world that practice idol worship. Islam strictly prohibits idol worship of any kind. God says in the Quran, "Indeed, those you (polytheists) call upon besides God are servants (i.e., creations) like you. So call upon them and let them respond to you, if you should be truthful" (Quran 7:194). God also says in the Quran, "O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Verily, those to whom you call, besides God, cannot create (even) a fly, if they all get together for the purpose. And if the fly should grab anything from them, they would have no power to regain it from the fly. Weak are those who call and (weak are) those to whom they call" (Quran 22:73).

Let us rationally analyze the concept of idol worship, taking into consideration the reasons given by those who practice it. The following are the reasons given by people with regard to idol worship:

- i. An Idol itself is not god. It is just a symbol of God.
- ii. Idols are just an object of concentration. We do not believe idols themselves to be Gods.
- iii. We do not worship the idols, we worship God through idols.
- iv. We revere God like we revere our leaders and forefathers by remembering them with their pictures and statues.
- v. God is everywhere, so worshiping idols is not a sin.
- vi. We use simple examples to make children understand. Similarly, common people are like

children when it comes to spirituality. That is why idols are used during worship.

Before we begin with the main discussion, we need to remember the following points:

i. God's image is an assumption

None of us have seen God. Therefore, the images of God that people worship are not correct. They are mere assumptions made by people.

ii. Images derived from Man's experience

The images attributed to God are derived from people's experiences of what they have seen and perceived in their daily life.

i. Why is idol worship a sin in Islam?

People think that worshipping idols is not a sin because idols are worshipped only to revere God. Idol worship is not a sin since God understands the intentions behind it. Even though people who worship God using idols might do so with the best of intentions, idol worship is still a sin because of the following reasons:

a. God did not permit idol worship

God did not allow people to worship Him through idols. In order to be remembered or thought upon no one would like to have the statue or painting of a dog or monkey made for him, since we consider them sub-human creatures which are far below us. Similarly all objects in this universe are created by God and everything here is so insignificant that there is no comparison to any of them with God. It is a gross injustice to God to erect any of these objects to

remember or to concentrate on God. Hence it becomes an unpardonable sin.

b. Images attributed to God disrespect God

Although images are made to revere God, unfortunately the same images become a means for disrespecting God. For example, we see the images attributed to God being used in calendars, hand bags, crackers, lottery tickets, invitation cards and even beedis. Once the calendar year expires, the calendar which has the image of 'God' gets thrown into the garbage bin. The same happens with used and old notebooks, invitation cards and hand bags. We see old lottery tickets with the image of God being used in hair salons, while some beedis with the image of God are flushed in toilets and others stamped under people's feet.

Would we accept such things to be done to our picture or the pictures of our parents or our beloved ones? If not, how can we accept such things done to God?

c. Images attributed to God are many times unacceptable to us

Some of the images attributed to God are many times unacceptable to us. For example, would we like to see ourselves with a big pot belly, disfigured face with teeth protruding outside? Would we agree to marry such a person or agree to get our children married to such persons? We would never accept. God who created beauty would be the most beautiful. The images do gross injustice to God by portraying God's image as something we ourselves would not accept. So the reason "We revere God like we revere our leaders

and forefathers by remembering them with their pictures and statues" is not valid.

d. Images of God distort the correct concept of God

When images of God are drawn from what man has experienced, man starts to think that God's nature is similar to humans and ends up attributing all types of human weaknesses like family, wives, concubines, sleep, forgetfulness etc. to God. This leads to the distortion of the correct belief of God thus making man careless about the accountability of his deeds as he starts to consider God weak.

ii. Do we need idols for concentration?

We do not need idols or images to concentrate. The following are the points which will give us a clear explanation on this aspect:

- i. We see many people close their eyes when they pray standing in front of the images or idols. If images and idols are used for concentration, why do people close their eyes?
- ii. Concentration needs to be at the maximum when we pray to God for an urgent need. For example: You travel in a bike and the brake of the bike fails. It is natural that you would pray to God and concentration for this prayer needs to be at the maximum. Would you search for a picture or an idol of God before you pray or would you directly pray to God?
- iii. If idol is used only for concentration, any object could be used and the substitution of any other object for the idol would not be opposed. This

recant saying, 'What matters is to be good, let us not worry about how we worship God'. Using this statement, the person attempts to nullify all the arguments against idol worship. If this statement is made by a person who worships God, we may ask him, if it is just about being a good human being, why do you worship God?

By worshipping God, the person agrees that as much as we strive to be good human beings, it is equally important to worship God. Since worship is for God, are we not supposed to see if God ratifies how we worship? We did see that God does not permit idol worship and also the problems with it and why it becomes a sin.

Let us try to understand this through a simple example. Say there is a person called A, who does a lot of social services like helping the poor, sick and the needy and he is known as an excellent human being in his society. One day, people discover that he was involved in treason by secretly helping an enemy nation by passing on confidential information to them.

On the other hand, we have another person called B, who does not do much social services or get involved in any social welfare activities and is not considered as a great person by his society. Although this person does not do any good acts, he stays loyal to his country. Compare these two persons, A and B. Who is better of the two? Can person A be forgiven just because he has helped a few people? In no case, will he be forgiven, as what he has done amounts to treachery and planning against the country. All countries consider treason as a very serious crime.

Similarly, God does love people who do good deeds, but under NO pretext, will God forgive those

possible for common people of all faiths to worship God without images and idols.

- ii. To say that common people are like children in spirituality and hence would need idols is like saying 'we need to draw a picture of a small sun for children to look at since they cannot see the sun rays directly'.
- iii. Only if the fundamentals of any particular subject are strong, a person will be able to excel in future. For example, a teacher of mathematics in standard one teaches the students that $2 + 2 = 4$. Irrespective of whether the student passes school or does graduation or does a Ph.D. in mathematics, the basics of $2 + 2 = 4$ will always remain the same, it will not change to 5 or 6. In higher standards the student may learn about Algebra, Trigonometry, and Logarithm etc., besides addition, but the fundamentals of addition will yet remain the same. If the teacher in standard one itself teaches the fundamentals wrong, how can you expect the student to excel in future?

Will you tell your son who is in standard one that $2 + 2$ is not equal to 4 but is equal to 5 or 6 and tell him the truth after he passes school? We would never do that. In fact if he makes a mistake you will correct him and say it is 4 and not wait till he graduates; and if you don't correct him initially you will ruin his future. Similarly the fundamentals of worship can never change irrespective of whether the person is a scholar or a commoner.

vi. Do we have an excuse to worship Idols?

When we confront the person who worships an idol with the evidences and reasons against it, he may

(creator) is within the creations, then what would happen to God when the creations come to an end?

- iii. Our universe comprises of matter and anti-matter. When matter and anti-matter come in contact with each other, they cancel each other and the result is non-existence. So if God is present everywhere, it would mean God is present in both matter and anti-matter. So when the matter and anti-matter come in contact with each other, it would mean that God becomes non-existent because the matter and anti-matter cancel each other. Hence, God being present everywhere is illogical and impossible.

Hence the reason 'God is everywhere, so worshipping idols is not a sin' is rationally incorrect.

iv. How can we achieve concentration in worship?

When man starts to think about the attributes of God like God's mercy, forgiveness, love, wisdom, power, etc. man would be able to really concentrate in his worship and the worship will also become meaningful. One important thing everyone needs to ask themselves is, have we ever tried to worship God without using an image or an idol? If no, how is it correct to dismiss the idea without even trying it?

v. Common people need Idols to worship God

The claim that common people are incapable of worshipping God without idols is false because of the following reasons:

- i. There are millions of common people in Islam, Judaism and several denominations of Christianity who worship God without idols. If all these people can worship God without idols, it should be

never happens. Hence the statement that idols are used only for concentration is not true.

- iv. Moreover, if the idols are used only for concentration then people should be ready to treat the idols and images like any other object. This never happens. Man gets the image and reflection of things where his mind and eyes concentrate. The idolater will have the image of the idol settled in mind, and idols will occupy God's place. This is why the statues and images are sanctified and honoured with worship (pujas). This shows that people treat the images and the idols as God. So the reasons "Idol itself is NOT god. It is just a symbol of God; idols are just an object of concentration. We do not believe idols themselves to be Gods and we do not worship the idols - we worship God through idols" are not true.
- v. It is a common practice for people to use 'photos' of the deceased during the anniversary rites. If the picture of the deceased is not to be found, would people agree to substitute with a picture of someone else? If no, how is it fine to substitute an image for God?

iii. Is God everywhere?

People think that since God is everywhere, idols and statues can be worshipped. This reasoning is incorrect due to the following reasons:

- i. If God is everywhere, then we can start worshipping any object present around us and need not look for an idol or an image attributed to God. Example: pen, chairs, tables, etc.
- ii. It is illogical to think that God is everywhere. Creations have a beginning and end. If the God

who do 'treachery' against Him, by worshipping things other than Him or by worshipping idols. It is hence, very clear that when a person is involved in idol worship, he disobeys God. A person can never be a good human being by disobeying God and doing things that displeases God. Hence, to be a good human being, a person has to obey God in all matters including worship. So the excuse 'What matters is to be good, let us not worry about how we worship God' is not justified.

vii. Essence of Worship

Worship is a deed done by the worshipper out of extreme piety, reverence and humility to God. It is unbecoming of man, who is the best of God's creations to offer worship to something that is equal to him or to something which is below him in status.

Moreover, worship with extreme reverence is shown only to the one who deserves it. God alone is perfect in greatness, wisdom and power. So God alone deserves worship and it is God's privilege to be worshipped and adored. What God alone deserves should not be given to others; and doing so is against God's will because it is like elevating them to the same level as God, who is the one and only deity.

To conclude, idol worship is a major sin, God did not permit idol worship, images attributed to God humiliate God, images of God distort the correct concept of God, images attributed to God are many times unacceptable to us, we do not need idols for concentration as concentration in worship can be achieved by thinking about the attributes of God and the argument "God is everywhere, so Idol worship is correct" is erroneous.

5. Life after Death

The question of whether or not there is life after death does not fall into the field of science, because science is only concerned with the classification and analysis of recorded data. Moreover, man has been busy with scientific enquiries and research, in the modern sense of the term, only for the last few centuries, while he has been familiar with the idea of life after death since time immemorial. God says in the Quran, "...He says, "Who will give life to bones while they are disintegrated?" Say, "He will give them life who produced them the first time; and He is, of all creation, Knowing" (Quran 36:78-79).

i. Need of Hereafter

We need a life after death, because complete justice cannot be established in this world. Let us try to understand this with a few examples. Hitler killed millions of Jews during his reign of terror. Even if the police had arrested him, what punishment can the human law give Hitler? The most they can do is to send Hitler to the gas chamber. That will only be punishment for the killing of one Jew. What about the remaining five million, nine hundred and ninety nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine Jews? How do we punish a suicide bomber who killed millions of innocent people? We will not be able to punish him as he is already dead.

We have heard of judges writing multiple life sentences which can go up to 100 years for the convicted criminals. This is because the criminal deserves so many years of punishment. Will the convict complete his term of punishment if it is 100 years? True and perfect justice would mean that the

people who were victims are also taken care of. What compensation can we give to those innocent people who were killed by people like Hitler and suicide bombers? We will not be able to compensate them because they are already dead.

Several righteous people were tortured and some even killed. Don't you think those righteous people should be rewarded for their righteousness? Rational thinking will lead us to conclude that there is definitely a need for an eternal life after death to compensate people for what they did in this world. God who is most just will not let people go without being rewarded or punished for what they did.

In the world, there is the powerful and the weak, the tyrant and the oppressed, the poor and the rich, the healthy and the sick, and the short lived and the long lived, and when death occurs, there must be another day in which all accounts will be settled.

ii. Concept of Hereafter

Islam teaches that the whole world will come to an end one day. All the human beings, from the first man to the last will be brought back to life (Resurrection) on the Day of Judgment and will be questioned for their deeds. People who have done good deeds and lived a life in accordance with God's command will receive a reward and people who have disobeyed God will be punished. The reward will be Heaven and the punishment will be Hell. The life in Heaven and Hell will be eternal and never-ending.

Since the life in Heaven and Hell is eternal and never ending, God can punish Hitler and the suicide bombers several times in the hell fire. Similarly, God

can reward and compensate countless times, the righteous and the innocent people who were killed.

iii. Resurrection

God who created us for the first time will give us life the second time after we die. We all know that creating something for the first time will be difficult. Repeating the same creation again will not be as difficult as the first time. God did not have any difficulty creating us the first time, why will He find it difficult to give us life after we die? Bringing us back alive after we die is indeed very easy for God.

iv. World has to End

The world has to come to an end for complete and perfect justice to be rendered to human beings. For example, I plant a tree and the tree benefits people by giving fruits and shade. You would agree that I need to be rewarded for it. Let us say, I plant the tree and I die a few years after I planted it. The tree continues to live for some 200 years. If I am re-born before those 200 years, I am not rewarded fully for planting that tree as the effects of that good deed still continue. So I will have to wait for 200 years till the tree dies to be fully rewarded for planting that tree.

This is the case with every good deed you initiate. Imagine starting an orphanage. You can be given the full reward only after the orphanage ceases to exist. This is the case with a bad deed you do as well. Take the example of the atom bomb dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Doctors say that the consequences of that bomb are still seen today. As long as the consequences exist, the people who were behind the dropping of the bomb can never be fully punished.

They have to be brought into complete account for all the damage they caused. To put it in a nutshell, unless the world ceases to exist, effects of many good and bad deeds will not cease to exist. So logically, the world has to come to an end for complete and perfect justice to be rendered.

6. Need of Prophets

God, in His Mercy, turned towards this shortcoming and disability of man. He sent messages and guidance to some select, noble souls through angels. These men, the prophets, conveyed the art of living and the ways of worship. They unveiled to people those truths of life which were out of bounds of the intellect. These Prophets were only human and they did not have any divine quality. They stand tall as the role models and leaders for human beings. God says in the Quran, "And We have not sent you, (O Muhammad), except as a mercy to the worlds" (Quran 21:107).

i. Why we need Prophets?

To teach someone how to use a washing machine, we use a washing machine to demonstrate. To teach someone how to drive a car, we use a car to demonstrate. If there were angels living on the earth then God would have sent angels to demonstrate as to how they will have to lead their lives. Now, as Human Beings are living on the earth, God sent a Human Being to demonstrate how to lead their lives. These demonstrators chosen by God are called Prophets.

ii. Was a Prophet sent to every nation?

Every nation in this world was sent a Prophet. Some of the Prophets are, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). They could also be called 'Avtaars' provided the term 'Avtaar' means 'one on whom something has been sent down or revealed'.

These great men, the prophets, selected by God to blaze out the true path for mankind, appeared in every region and nation and in all times and climes. Each of them instructed the people to believe in and worship none but One God only and to abide by the code and way of life which they brought and spend their lives according to His wishes. Not one of these prophets invited men to worship anyone other than the One God. On the contrary, they made every effort to drag people away from this sin (of polytheism). People accepted their teachings and began treading the true path.

iii. Why did God Himself not come to Earth?

God and man are opposites. If God becomes a man, then He cannot be God. It is like having a diagram which is square and circle at the same time. For example:

- a. God will not die, Man will die.
- b. God is not bound by time and space. Man is bound by Time and space. This is a huge problem to be solved when we say God became man.
- c. Moreover, man has severe limitations. For example, man cannot hear what the dog hears; man cannot see what the owl sees, etc. If God becomes a man, it would mean that God became a man with all these limitations, which does not befit the qualities

of God. So the fact is, either a person can be God at a given point of time or be human at a given point of time and not both simultaneously.

One might argue, God can do everything and hence He can be God and human at the same time. If God can do everything, would God be unjust? Would God lie? The answer is 'No'. If God wants to lie or be unjust, He can; but He will not. The reason is, the acts of being unjust and lying do not befit the qualities of God. We can conclude that God will only do things that befit His divinity. We can understand that God becoming man does not befit His divinity, as it ascribes limitations to God.

Even if we assume that God can come down to the earth, then it would not serve the purpose at all. We know of incarnated gods who married thousands of wives, stole things, lied and cheated. The common humans might argue that since they were gods they could do it, but we humans should not do such acts. This proves that incarnate gods cannot be good role models for us, since they do not suffer from the limitations we have, they are not bound by the principles that we are often bound by. Moreover they easily overcame problems with their godly powers, where as we humans have to strive and struggle to tackle them. All these points suggest that the best role-models for humans can be a human and not an incarnate God.

7. Quran being the word of God

To every Prophet, God gave some miracles, but gone are the Prophets and their miracles. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the last prophet and God gave him a timeless miracle, and that miracle

is the Quran. The Quran is the only sacred text that has been in circulation from a long period of time, yet remains as pure as the day it was revealed over 1430 years ago in its original Arabic language. Nothing has been added or removed from it and it is free from errors or contradictions. God says in the Quran, "...And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as a guidance and mercy and good tidings..." (Quran 16:89).

It has often been argued that the Quran is not only the first book, and the highest linguistic achievement, of the Arabic language, but that it is also Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) strongest argument against those who doubted his Message. The question that needs to be addressed here concerns the reason why a book, a composition of language, should be hailed as Islam's strongest miracle and argument. The point has sometimes been made that other prophets had more tangible miracles. In the case of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), however, the miracle was not comparable to staff of Prophet Moosa (peace be upon him) staff or the healing power of Prophet Isa (peace be upon him), but was more than that.

Muslims strongly believe Quran to be the final word of God for the entire mankind. Few people argue that it is not the word of God and it is just another religious book. Following are some rational arguments to prove that the Quran can only be the word of God:

i. Falsification Test

Surprisingly enough, the Quran itself provides us with the test of authenticity and offers challenges to prove it wrong. God says in the Quran, "Then do they

not reflect upon the Quran? If it had been from (any) other than God, they would have found within it much contradiction" (Quran 4:82). This is a clear challenge to the people inviting them to find a mistake. The seriousness and difficulty of the challenge aside, presenting such a challenge itself is inconsistent with human nature. One doesn't take an exam in school, and after finishing the exam, write a note to the valuator at the end saying, "This answer script is perfect. There are no mistakes in it. Find out if you can". One just doesn't do that. The teacher would not sleep until he found a mistake.

To prove the book wrong, one needs to just point out one mistake and then the claim of the book will be proved wrong and then the entire religion itself would become wrong. But since 1430 years not a single person was successful in identifying a genuine mistake from the Quran.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had an uncle by the name of Abu Lahab. This man hated Islam to such an extent that he used to follow the Prophet around in order to discredit him. If Abu Lahab saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) speaking to a stranger, he would wait until they parted and then would go to the stranger and ask him, "What did he tell you? Did he say, 'Black'? Well, it's white. Did he say 'morning'? Well, it's night." He faithfully said the exact opposite of whatever he heard Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Muslims say. However, about ten years before Abu Lahab died; a little chapter in the Quran (Surah Al-Lahab, Number 111) was revealed about him. It distinctly stated that he would go to the fire (i.e., Hell). In other words, it affirmed that he would never become a Muslim and would

therefore be condemned forever. For ten years all Abu Lahab had to do was say, "I heard that it has been revealed to Muhammad that I will never change - that I will never become a Muslim and will enter the Hellfire. Well, I want to become Muslim now. How do you like that? What do you think of your divine revelation now?" But he never did that. And yet, that is exactly the kind of behaviour one would have expected from him since he always sought to contradict Islam.

In essence, Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "You hate me and you want to finish me? Here, say these words, and I am finished. Come on, say them". But Abu Lahab never said them. Ten years and in all that time he never accepted Islam or even became sympathetic to the Islamic cause. This was only possible because God revealed the Quran and He knew that whatever may happen, Abu Lahab would never accept Islam.

ii. Linguistic Challenge

Literature and poetry have been instruments of human expression and creativity, in all cultures. The world also witnessed an age when literature and poetry occupied pride of position, similar to that now enjoyed by science and technology. Even non-Muslim scholars agree that the Quran is Arabic literature par excellence, that it is the best Arabic literature on the face of the earth. The Quran challenges mankind to produce something similar. God says in the Quran, "And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down (i.e., the Quran) upon Our Servant (i.e., Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)), then produce a surah (chapter) the like thereof and call upon your witnesses (i.e., supporters) other than God, if you should be truthful.

But if you do not – and you will never be able to – then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers” (Quran 2:23-24). The verse not only challenges the readers to produce a chapter but in the next verse it states that they will never be able to produce anything similar. This shows how confident is God with the challenge which He is posing to the readers.

God repeats the same challenge in another two verses. God says in the Quran, “...Say, “Then bring forth a surah (chapter) like it...” (Quran 10:38). God also says in the Quran, “...Say, “Then bring ten surahs (chapters) like it...” (Quran 11:13). Ever since the Quran was revealed, 1430 years ago, no one has been able to produce a single chapter like the chapters of the Quran in their beauty, eloquence, splendour, wise legislation, true information, true prophecy, and other perfect attributes. Also, note that the smallest chapter in the Quran (Chapter 108) is only ten words, yet no one has ever been able to meet this challenge, then or today. Some of the disbelieving Arabs who were enemies of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) tried to meet this challenge to prove that Muhammad was not a true prophet, but they failed to do so. This failure was despite the fact that the Quran was revealed in their own language and dialect and that the Arabs at the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were a very eloquent group of people who used to compose beautiful and excellent poetry, still read and appreciated today.

The challenge of the Quran is to produce a single Surah (chapter) like the Surahs it contains. The same challenge is repeated in the Quran several times. The challenge to produce a Surah, which, in beauty,

eloquence, depth and meaning is at least somewhat similar to a Quranic Surah, remains unmet to this day.

iii. Scientific Proof

The Quran is not a book of Science but a book of 'Signs'. There are more than six thousand 'signs' in the Quran of which more than a thousand deal with hard core Science. The Quran speaks about astronomy, physics, geography, geology, oceanology, biology, botany, zoology, medicine, physiology, embryology and general science. All these scientific aspects which are mentioned in the Quran are established scientific facts and not hypotheses and theories based on mere assumptions and not backed by proof. The Quran was revealed 1430 years back when science had not progressed but still it is very much accurate and precise in its claim.

The Quran speaks about the creation of universe, spherical shape of the earth, the light of the moon, the rotation of the sun, extinguishing of the sun, the expansion of the universe, existence of sub-automatic particles, water cycle, structure of the mountains, sweet and salt water, darkness in the depth of the ocean, component of living things, creation in pairs, animals living in communities, flight of the birds, the bee, spider's web, lifestyle and communication of ants, benefit of honey, blood circulation, production of milk, creation of man in stages, fingerprints, pain receptors, etc.

All the scientific aspects mentioned in the Quran have proved to be right according to modern science. To attribute the presence of scientific facts in the Quran to coincidence would be against common sense and a true scientific approach. Amazingly, the Quran

spoke about several 21st century discoveries in science 1430 years ago with pristine accuracy, which was impossible for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to know on his own. The scientific evidences of the Quran clearly prove its divine origin. No human could have produced a book, 1430 years ago, that would contain profound scientific facts, to be discovered by humankind centuries later.

Thus, these are various rational proofs which the Quran has to offer to prove it to be true and to prove it to be the final word from God which is revealed for the entire mankind to read, understand, follow and implement.

Rationalism in Acts of Worship

1. Salah (Daily Prayers)

Prayer is the second pillar of Islam. After a person testifies to or affirms their belief in God and His messenger Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) the next important step is to pray. It constitutes the physical, mental, and spiritual submission to God which starts by pronouncing God's greatness and ends with salutation of peace. The performance of Prayer serves as the foundation of Islam, without it there is no Islam. It is the concrete proof of our submission to God and it also fulfils our very purpose of creation.

Muslims need to pray in the way that has been prescribed by God and taught by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). God says in the Quran, "...And celebrate the Praises of your Lord, before rising of the sun and before (its) setting" (Quran 50:39). God also says in the Quran, "'Verily, the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours" (Quran 4:103).

Let us try to understand the way Muslims pray and try to understand the significance of the positions we assume and the order in which we assume them. Before we begin it is worth remembering that Islam is a religion that is actually more than a religion. It is a way of life. While for many religion is something practiced on a weekly basis, for Muslims it is a way of life that flows into every aspect of their being. Islam is concerned with healthy believers; healthy in mind, body and spirituality. The way Muslims pray demonstrates this.

Muslims pray in the early morning before sunrise, in the middle of the day, in the afternoon, at sunset and at night. Muslims pray in obedience to God because they believe God created humankind for no other purpose except to worship Him. Thus the epitome of worship is prayer. God is the most kind and the most merciful so, as we would expect, the benefits embedded in the prayer are for us and us alone. God does not need our prayers but we surely need the benefits we attain from praying. The benefits are spiritual, emotional and physical and the most important is establishing a connection to our Lord, the Most Merciful.

The Arabic word for prayer is *Salah* and interestingly it is a word that denotes connection. Prayer is our way of connecting with and maintaining a connection with God. Prayer at fixed times serve as a reminder of why we are here and helps to direct a person's thoughts and actions away from sin and onto the remembrance of God.

Prayer comprises of both physical movement and mental concentration. It includes the posture of standing, deep bowing, kowtowing (touching the forehead on the ground) and sitting. The movements or postures have been compared to other exercise regimes and there is no doubt that five times per day, a Muslim is engaging in a moderate exercise regime that encourages good blood circulation, regular calm controlled breathing and general suppleness. Although not physically over demanding it is a mild form of physical exercise done consistently.

It is important to perfect all of the movements of the prayer, rather than haphazardly rushing through them because each movement has a purpose. From the

beginning of the prayer by saying *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) to begin the prayer the movements and postures are of both physical and spiritual benefit for us. Standing calmly and gathering our thoughts improves posture, balance, and self-awareness, as well as normalizing blood pressure and breathing. However, saying *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) also denotes that the prayer has begun and all matters relating to this world are left far behind. A calm meditative state is achieved and a connection is made.

In the few minutes it takes to pray, each person stands before God in full submission. We gain peace, tranquility and numerous health benefits a few of which are mentioned below.

Bowing stretches and tones the muscles of the lower back, thighs, legs and calves, and abdomen. The physical benefits of prostration are many; prostration can help maintain the lymph and skeletal systems and the prostate, bladder and adrenal glands. The placement of the forehead upon the ground causes an increased blood supply to the brain and has been cited as having a good effect upon memory, vision, hearing, concentration, and other cognitive abilities. As the person praying moves through the positions of prayer, standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting, it assists in general good health by stimulating the large intestine and aiding detoxification and digestion.

The position of prostration, when the forehead touches the ground is exclusively associated with the Islamic form of prayer. It is the apex of a person's prayer and it is mentioned in the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the position in which a believer is as close to God as it is possible to be. "The nearest one comes to his Lord is when he is

kowtowing". This is the supreme benefit in the different postures of prayer and it is a mercy from God that so many other physical benefits are also associated with prayer. God asks us to worship Him and then rewards us with countless blessings beyond the supreme benefit of pleasing our Creator.

It is rational to think that the One who created us also gave us the means with which to keep ourselves healthy and strong both in belief and physical attributes related to the mind and body.

2. Sawm (Fasting)

It is obligatory for every Muslim who has attained the age of maturity to fast in the month of Ramadan. God says in the Quran, "O you who believe. Fasting is prescribed to you, as it was prescribed to those before you that you may (learn) self-control" (Quran 2:183). For few, fasting is just keeping away from food and giving physical torture to one self. Various researches today have highlighted various benefits of fasting but Muslims do not fast to reap the health benefits but they fast as it is a command from God as they attain God consciousness.

Many people observe fasting as a religious obligation but only few know the health benefits it has. Fasting is a good practice, if properly implemented. It promotes elimination of toxins from the body, reduces blood sugar and fat stores. It promotes healthy eating habits and boost immunity.

Fasting has physical and psychological benefits. There are many health benefits of fasting, when the body is starved of food, it starts burning fat, and therefore, if done correctly, fasts can be a good way to lose weight. But there are other merits too. Fasting in

general has been used in medicine for medical reasons including weight management, for rest of the digestive tract and for lowering lipids. There are many adverse effects of fasting. Some of them are as follows:

i. Boost your Brain

No doubt you'll be aware of the positive effects fasting can have on your mental well-being and spiritual focus, but the brain-boosting powers of fasting are even more significant than you might think. A study carried out by scientists in the USA found that the mental focus achieved during fasting increases the level of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which causes the body to produce more brain cells, thus improving brain function. Likewise, a distinct reduction in the amount of the hormone cortisol, produced by the adrenal gland, means that stress levels are greatly reduced both during and after fasting.

ii. Ditch Bad Habits

As you will be fasting during the day, fasting is the perfect time to ditch your bad habits for good. Vices such as smoking and sugary foods should not be indulged during fasting, and as you abstain from them your body will gradually acclimatise to their absence, until your addiction is kicked for good. It's also much easier to quit habits when you do so in a group, which should be easy to find during fasting. Fasting's ability to help you cut out bad habits is so significant that the UK's National Health Service recommends it as the ideal time to ditch smoking.

iii. Lower Cholesterol

We all know that weight loss is one of the possible physical outcomes of fasting during fasting, but there's also a whole host of healthy changes going on behind the scenes. A team of cardiologists in the UAE found that people observing fasting enjoy a positive effect on their lipid profile, which means there is a reduction of cholesterol in the blood. Low cholesterol increases cardiovascular health, greatly reducing the risk of suffering from heart disease, a heart attack, or a stroke. What's more, if you follow a healthy diet after Ramadan, this newly lowered cholesterol level should be easy to maintain.

iv. Lasting Appetite Reduction

One of the main problems with extreme fad diets is that any weight lost is often quickly put back on, sometimes even with a little added extra. This isn't the case with fasting. The reduction in food consumed throughout fasting causes your stomach to gradually shrink, meaning you'll need to eat less food to feel full. If you want to get into the habit of healthy eating then fasting is a great time to start. When it's finished your appetite will be lower than it was before, and you'll be far less likely to over indulge with your eating.

v. Promotes Detoxification

As well as being great for spiritually cleansing yourself, fasting acts as a fantastic detox for your body. By not eating or drinking throughout the day your body will be offered the rare chance to detoxify your digestive system throughout the month. When your body starts eating into fat reserves to create

energy, it will also burn away any harmful toxins that might be present in fat deposits. This body cleanse will leave a healthy blank slate behind, and is the perfect stepping stone to a consistently healthy lifestyle.

Processed foods contain lots of additives. These additives may become toxins in the body. Some of them promote production of advanced glycation end products (AGEs). Most of these toxins are stored in fats. Fat is burnt during fasting, especially when it is prolonged. And the toxins are released. The liver, kidneys and other organs in the body are involved in detoxification.

vi. Absorb more Nutrients

By not eating throughout the day during fasting you'll find that your metabolism becomes more efficient, meaning the amount of nutrients you absorb from food improves. This is because of an increase in a hormone called adiponectin, which is produced by a combination of fasting and eating late at night, and allows your muscles to absorb more nutrients. This will lead to health benefits all around the body, as various areas are able to better absorb and make use of the nutrients they need to function.

vii. Rests Digestive System

During fasting, the digestive organs rest. The normal physiologic functions continue especially production of digestive secretions, but at reduced rates. This exercise helps to maintain balance of fluids in the body. Breakdown of food takes place at steady rates. Release of energy also follows a gradual pattern. Fasting however does not stop production of acids in the stomach. This is the reason patients with peptic

ulcer are advised to approach fasting with caution. Some experts believe they should not fast.

viii. Resolves Inflammatory Response

Some studies show that fasting promotes resolution of inflammatory diseases and allergies. Examples of such inflammatory diseases are rheumatoid arthritis, arthritis and skin diseases such as psoriasis. Some experts assert that fasting may promote healing of inflammatory bowel diseases such as ulcerative colitis.

ix. Reduces Blood Sugar

Fasting increases breakdown of glucose so that the body can get energy. It reduces production of insulin. This rests the pancreas. Glucagon is produced to facilitate the breakdown of glucose. The outcome of fasting is a reduction in blood sugar.

x. Increases Fat Breakdown

The first response of the body to fasting is break down of glucose. When the store of glucose is exhausted, ketosis begins. This is the breaking down of fats to release energy. The fats stored in kidney and muscles are broken down to release energy.

xi. Corrects High Blood Pressure

Fasting is one of the non-drug methods of reducing blood pressure. It helps to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is clogging of arteries by fat particles. During fasting glucose and later, fat stores are used to produce energy. Metabolic rate is reduced during fasting. The fear-flight hormones such as adrenaline and noradrenaline are also reduced. This

keeps the metabolic steady and within limits. The benefit is a reduction in blood pressure.

xii. Promotes Weight Loss

Fasting promotes rapid weight loss. It reduces the store of fats in the body. However fasting is not a good weight loss strategy. Reducing fat and sugar intake, and increasing fruits and rest are better measures to achieve weight reduction.

xiii. Promotes Healthy Diet

It has been observed that fasting reduces craving for processed foods. It promotes desire for natural foods, especially water and fruits. This is one way fasting promotes a healthy lifestyle.

xiv. Boosts Immunity

When an individual is on balanced diet in between fasts, this can boost immunity. Elimination of toxins and reduction in fat stores also helps the body. When individuals take fruits to break a fast, they increase the body's store of essential vitamins and minerals. Vitamins A and E are good antioxidants readily available in fruits. They help to boost immunity.

By this we can understand that there is a huge wisdom behind making it obligatory for people to fast for a month every year. Keeping the religious and spiritual benefits aside, we can scientifically and rationally prove the benefits one can get from the act of fasting.

3. Zakat (Charity)

Islam had made giving of Zakat as an obligation on every Muslim who has wealth above a certain limit.

A mere 2.5% of the excess wealth must be given annually to the poor and needy and to various other categories of people. God says in the Quran, "Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed for it and for bringing hearts together (for Islam) and for freeing captives (or slaves) and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the (stranded) traveller – an obligation (imposed) by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise" (Quran 9:60). Thus giving Zakat has a lot of social and economic benefits to offer, they are as follows:

i. Equal Distribution of Wealth

The main problem of modern economic system is unequal distribution of wealth which is the main cause of social and economic problems. Islamic economic system solves this problem with Zakat in a good manner. Once the government implements the system of Zakat, it will automatically solve the problem of unequal distribution of wealth because the rich people will give zakat to the poor for consumption.

ii. Economic Growth

Islam discourages people to accumulate their wealth but it wants people to circulate the money in the market as it will lead to business and employment. If capital goes towards accumulation, then the economic activities will be badly affected. For example, if a person has accumulated money and holds it for a period of one year then he will have to end up paying Zakat at the end of the year, which in turn will reduce his wealth. Thus, in order to avoid reduction in wealth, people invest their money in some business

venture, which ultimately helps in the economic growth of the nation.

iii. Solution for Unemployment

The basic reason of unemployment is the shortage of an effective demand. It is Zakat through which unemployment decreases by increasing the level of effective demand. In an Islamic economic system, unemployment allowance can be given to unemployed persons.

iv. Protection of Needy Persons

There are different people living in a society, there are some people unable to earn and depend on others for financial help. Such people can be honourably protected with necessities of life with the help of Zakat.

v. Increase in Collective Welfare

It is the most basic source of social welfare. In an Islamic society, Zakat funds can be utilized in schools and hospitals to help the poor. This act promotes collective welfare of the society.

vi. Reducing Poverty

One of the biggest problems faced by most of the countries in the world is poverty and Islam strives to eliminate this with the system of Zakat. Zakat is a system where the distribution of the wealth happens from upwards to downwards in the society. The wealthier a person is, the more Zakat he has to pay. The downward flow of money through Zakat aims on eradicating poverty, and every person slowly and gradually reaches the point where they can buy

commodities with ease. This creates an increase in the demand, and to cater to it; ample supply is made. Zakat also helps to eradicate begging, and this will result in economic growth of the people. In this way, Zakat creates socio-economic balance in the society in a smooth and unhindered way.

All the above mentioned points are a rational explanation to understand the importance of the system of Zakat for a society. It is a system which is beneficial for the individual, society and the entire nation.

4. Hajj (Pilgrimage)

Pilgrimage to the city of Makkah must be performed at least once in a life time, if they are physically and financially capable. Performing the pilgrimage is a temporary suspension of all worldly activities, and is a time for one to reflect, worship, seek the forgiveness of Allah and attain His closeness. God says in the Quran, "... And (due) to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage to the House, for whoever is able to find thereto a way..." (Quran 3:97). The following are the various benefits from performing Hajj, which could be rationally explained:

i. Universal Brotherhood

Hajj is a platform to exhibit universal brotherhood; it is an act which helps people to overcome any form of racial discrimination. During Hajj, Muslims from all parts of the world come together and show their love for one another and get to know one another. That is also accompanied by exhortations, guiding towards truth and encouraging people to adhere to it. Hajj helps humans break the many barriers of race, language, ethnicity, and colour that divide them, and

helps them to create the unity of a single human family based on the recognition of God as the Creator and Sustainer of all creation.

ii. Sense of Unity

The Muslims demonstrate unity in time, place, actions and appearance. All of them stand in the different locations of Hajj at the same time, doing the same actions, wearing the same clothes, with humility before God, may He be glorified and exalted.

iii. Increases the Level of Spirituality

Hajj is actually a spiritual journey. Hajj helps individuals become whole once again after cleansing themselves of the many sins they accumulate over the course of their lives. Hajj strengthens one's belief and brings the pilgrim closer to God. Hajj helps in illuminating the mind with the sparks of Faith. Hajj, as a travel, familiarizes man with patience, discomfort and teaches him discipline and abidance by orders. Thus, it overall contributes to improve the level of spirituality of the individual.

Man is a spiritual being, and an act like Hajj helps a person to improve his spirituality level and become a much better person in Islam. Thus, Islam focuses on developing the individual, improving the society and ultimately making the world a better place to live in.

Rationalism in Islamic Laws

Islam is not only the name of a religion but it is a way of life, thus, Islam gives laws to be followed by people in every aspect of their lives. The Islamic law deals with many topics, including crime, politics, and economics, as well as personal matters such as sexual intercourse, marriage, division of property, hygiene, diet, everyday etiquette, etc. The following are the various laws of Islam and its rational argument.

1. Hijab for Women

Hijab is not merely a covering dress, but more importantly, it is the behaviour, manners, speech and appearance in public. The headscarf is an outer manifestation of an inner commitment to worshipping God it symbolizes a commitment to piety. Modest clothing and hijab are precautions to avoid social violations. The following verse of the Quran instructs the women to observe the Hijab. God says in the Quran, "O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them (when they go out or are among men). That is better in order that they may be known (to be Muslims) and not annoyed..." (Quran 33:59).

The status of women in Islam is often the target of attacks in the secular media. The 'hijab' or the Islamic dress is cited by many as an example of the 'subjugation' of women under Islamic law. When Tawakkol Karman, the First Arab Woman and Youngest Nobel Peace Laureate was asked about her Hijab By Journalists and how it is not proportionate

with her level of intellect and education, she replied, "Man in The early times was almost naked, and as his intellect evolved he started wearing clothes. What I am today and what I'm wearing represents the highest level of thought and civilization that man has achieved, and is not regressive. It's the removal of clothes again that is regressive back to ancient times".

Basically, Islam has prescribed Hijab for women in order to avoid attention from unwanted males. As the appearance is subjected to public scrutiny, the beauty, or perhaps lack of it, has been removed from the realm of what can legitimately be discussed. No one knows how the hair of a woman looks or even if they have unsightly stretch marks, because no one knows, no one cares. Feeling that one has to meet the impossible male standards of beauty is tiring and often humiliating. The girls, who don't wear Hijab, spend their entire teenage years trying to do it. They also tend to spend a lot of money on potions and lotions in hopes of becoming the next Miss World.

The definition of beauty is ever-changing; waifish is good, waifish is bad, athletic is good, sorry, now it is bad. Women are not going to achieve equality by putting their bodies on display, as some people would like to have you believe. That would only make women a party to their own objectification. True equality will only be there when women don't need to display themselves to get attention and won't need defence for their decision to keep their bodies to themselves.

2. Dealing with Rape

Islam is strictly against committing the act of rape. God says in the Quran, "And come not near to

unlawful sex. Verily, it is a shameful (deed) and an act evil, opening the road (to many other evils)” (Quran 17:32).

The vilest and the most violent of all the sexual crimes is rape as the mental agony of rape cannot be erased with the passage of time. The amount of rapes in India is alarming and the statistics bears testimony to that. The statistics according to National Crimes Records Bureau shows us that:

- India stands at number 3 in the world for the number of rapes in a year behind only to U.S.A and South Africa.
- Every 22 minutes one woman is raped in India which means that approximately 65 women are raped in India every day.
- Three Dalit women are raped in some part of India every day.
- After Independence, crimes like murder, robbery and kidnapping have increased by 106%, 27% and 298% respectively. The rate of Rapes has increased by a staggering 792%. This means that rape rates have increased almost 9 times since 1947.

The statistics above reveal the seriousness and the rampancy of this evil act. This makes it imperative for us to seek solutions to this social evil.

Islam provides the solution to eradicate rape. Solutions to any disease whether it is social or physical, will be effective only if the root causes for the problem are taken into consideration and analyzed. For example, head ache. A head ache can be caused by different reasons like, common cold, eye defect, brain tumour, sinusitis, lack of sleep, hunger or thirst etc. A good doctor will determine the cause of the head ache

before he attempts to treat it. Once the cause of the head ache is identified, the treatment becomes effective. Similarly, for us to find effective solutions to rapes, we need to identify the root causes and eliminate them.

Studies have shown that the major cause for rape is consumption of alcohol, watching pornography, treating women as sex objects in the society, lack of strict laws and lack of God consciousness. Islam stops this problem at the grass root by prohibiting alcohol, prohibiting the viewing of pornography, treating women with respect and dignity, having strong punishment for the culprits, and asking people to become God conscious as they will be answerable to God on the day of judgement. Other than these laws, Islam offers strict moral codes for men and women; it prohibits women to be alone with a man (who is not her close relative) and it also prohibits women to travel long distances without a male relative. All these aspects, supplement in curbing the immoral act of rape.

The solution proposed by Islam deals with all the root causes of rape and other sexual crimes. This is exactly why it is the best solution. If adopted by humans throughout the world, the Islamic solution would decrease these horrible crimes in a profound manner. Islam's solution to rape eliminates all the triggers to rape.

3. Polygamy

Polygamy means a system of marriage whereby one person has more than one spouse. Polygamy can be of two types. One is polygyny where a man marries more than one woman, and the other is polyandry,

where a woman marries more than one man. In Islam, limited polygyny is permitted; whereas polyandry is completely prohibited. God says in the Quran, "...then marry those that please you of (other) women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then (marry only) one..." (Quran 4:3).

Polygyny can only be proven to be rationally practical and necessary when the population of women is more than the men in the world. Let us try to understand this with the help of various situations:

- i. A female child has more immunity than a male child. A female child can fight the germs and diseases better than the male child. For this reason, during the paediatric age itself there are more deaths among males as compared to the females. Thus, there are more women than men.
- ii. During wars, there are more men killed as compared to women, as majority of the people who take part in war are men. Thus, there are more women than men. We can understand this with a practical example, after the Second World War the population of women was more than men in Europe as more than 8 million men died in the war. In this situation, the only moral solution was that men should marry more than one woman to make them part of a respectable family.
- iii. More men die due to accidents, as there are more men riders and drivers than women. Thus, there are more women than men.
- iv. More men die due to diseases, as there are more men to indulge in consumption of alcohol, tobacco and various forms of injurious products when compared to women. Thus, there are more women than men.

If we take all these aspects into consideration, we can generally conclude that the population of woman is more than men in most parts of the world and in order to give a life partner to every woman in a respectable manner, the solution is to get her married to a man who already has a wife.

Polygamy is also is very helpful in cases where a barren or she is ill. In both these cases the man can marry another women rather than adopting wrong and immoral means to fulfill his sexual desires.

According to a study in Scientific American, authored by Thomas Perls and Ruth Fretts, women live longer than men. In all developed countries and most developing countries, women outlive men, sometimes by a margin of as much as 10 years. In the United States, life expectancy at birth is about 79 years for women and about 72 years for men. The gender gap has widened in this century as gains in female life expectancy have exceeded those for males. The death rates for women are lower than those for men at all ages, even before birth. More boys than girls die in infancy and during each subsequent year of life, mortality rates for males exceed those for females, so that by the age of 25 women are in the majority. From this study as well, it is clear that women outnumber men in various countries.

According to an another report published by Medical Diary on Sep 23, 2014, states that scientists have confirmed that throughout history women have outnumbered men and, consequently, contributed more to human genetic diversity. The authors claim to have used higher resolution gene sequencing than previous research to compare the DNA of hundreds of people in modern populations around the world. Peering into

their father inherited Y chromosomes and mother-inherited mitochondrial DNA; scientists can deduce a wealth of information about historical populations. Not only did they confirm the dominance of women. Thus, if we want to give a life partner to every woman in a respectable manner, then polygamy is the only solution.

A recent report published in The Times of India on March 3rd, 2015 states that the released census data shows that there are about 6.6 million more women who are “currently married” than men. While part of this might be accounted for by married men who have migrated abroad for work leaving their wives behind, the data also indicates that there are a very large number of women in polygamous marriages. On the other hand, majority of the people living in India are Hindus and Polygamy is illegal in India for Hindus and other religious groups under the Hindu Marriage Act but it is still practiced in India.

4. Eating of Non-Vegetarian Food

Few people feel that killing an animal is a ruthless act then why then do Muslims consume non-vegetarian food? ‘Vegetarianism’ is now a movement the world over. Many even associate it with animal rights. Indeed, a large number of people consider the consumption of meat and other non-vegetarian products to be a violation of animal rights. God says in the Quran, “O you who have believed, fulfill (all) contracts. Lawful for you are the animals of grazing livestock...” (Quran 5:1). God also says in the Quran, “And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and (numerous) benefits, and for them you eat” (Quran 16:5).

Islam enjoins mercy and compassion for all living creatures. At the same time Islam maintains that God has created the earth and its wondrous flora and fauna for the benefit of mankind. It is upto mankind to use every resource in this world judiciously, as a Divine blessing and trust from God.

The various reasons why Islam permits people to eat non-vegetarian food because meat is nutritious and rich in complete protein, because human beings are given omnivorous set of teeth by God which are used to use meat, because the digestive system of human beings is designed in such a way it can digest non-vegetarian food, etc. The argument of eating non-vegetarian food also holds good because if people stop eating cattle, then the world will face a problem of over population of cattle, which will again become an even bigger problem to handle. Thus, all these proofs and logical explanations should help us realise the truth and help us understand as to why Islam has allowed people to consume non-vegetarian food.

5. Division of Property

Some people have the opinion that Islam is unjust because the women's share in the inheritance of property is only half that of a man. God says in the Quran, "God instructed you concerning your children (i.e., their portions of inheritance), for the male, what is equal to the share of two females..." (Quran 4:11).

The various reasons for such division of property are because the male inherits get double the female because he financially supports the family and the female does not have the same. On the other hand, the females sometimes inherit more than their male

counterpart, as she lands up getting a share from her father's, mother's, husband's and children's property.

6. Circumcision

Circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin (prepuce) from the human penis. Islam is currently the largest single religious group in which the practice is widespread and it is mentioned in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). God says in the Quran, "Then We revealed to you, (O Muhammad), to follow the religion of Abraham..." (Quran 16:123). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has said, "The Prophet Ibrahim circumcised himself when he was eighty years old" (Bukhari, Muslim & Ahmad).

Dr. Muhammad 'Ali al-Baar (a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in the UK and a consultant to the Islamic Medicine department of the King Fahd Centre for Medical Research in the King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah) says in his book *al-Khitaan* (Circumcision), Circumcision of new born boys (i.e., within the first month of life) brings numerous health benefits.

The various benefits of performing circumcision are that it protects against local infection in the penis, it protects against the infections in the urethra, it protects against cancer of the penis, it helps to abstain from Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and it protects the wives against cervical cancer.

7. Prohibition of Pork

Many people have an opinion on the reason as to why Islam has forbidden pork when it has permitted other form of non-vegetarian food. God says in the Quran, "Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the

flesh of swine, and that which has been decided to other than God, and (those animals) killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten..." (Quran 5:3).

When we try to ponder over the prohibition of pork in Islam, we come across both the moral and scientific reason. The moral reason is that people should not consume its meat because it is the filthiest animal on earth as it lives and thrives on muck, faeces and dirt. It is a natural scavenger which is created by God and on the other hand it is the most shameless animal because it invites its friends to have sex with its mate

The scientific reasons are that consumption of pork causes several diseases and it has fat building material. Thus, all these points help us understand the wisdom of God to forbid the consumption of pork. Surely, a person who ponders over this issue with an open mind will stop its consumption.

8. Prohibition of Alcohol

Alcohol has become so common that it is sold in every nook and corner of the country today, which has become a major contributing factor for various crimes. But Islam has strictly prohibited us from its consumption and thus Muslims are the largest number of teetotallers across the globe. God says in the Quran, "O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, (sacrificing on) stone alters (to other than Allah), and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful" (Quran 5:90).

The impact of alcohol consumption reaches deep into society. Alcohol consumption causes harm far beyond the physical and psychological health of the drinker. It also causes harm to the well-being and health of others. When people are under the influence of alcohol, they go on to commit a number of wrong acts such as traffic violations, fights with family members, beating up their wives, cancer, unhealthy sexual behaviour, impacting interpersonal relationship with friends and neighbour and the most important, committing rapes. People commit such big crimes under the influence of alcohol that they regret it throughout their lives.

That's not all; there are several scientific reasons for the prohibition of consumption of alcohol. According to National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), in 2013, of the 71,713 total liver disease deaths among individuals aged 12 and older, 46.4 percent involved alcohol. Among males, 48.9 percent of the 46,240 liver disease deaths involved alcohol. Among females, 42.7 percent of the 25,433 liver disease deaths involved alcohol. Among all cirrhosis deaths in 2011, 48.0 percent were alcohol related. The proportion of alcohol related cirrhosis was highest (72.7 percent) among decedent's aged 25–34, followed by decedents aged 35–44, at 70.3 percent. In 2009, alcohol-related liver disease was the primary cause of almost 1 in 3 liver transplants in the United States. Drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, pharynx, larynx, liver, and breast. The maximum number of deaths in the world is related to the consumption of alcohol. Millions of people die every year only because of their intake of alcohol.

On the other hand, many people argue that alcohol has many benefits economically and individually as well. It economically helps the country as it helps them to generate money through its import and sales tax and it is beneficial from an individual perspective as it plays a role of a medicine on many occasions. But we need to understand that larger side of the issues that it might be beneficial to certain extent but it is causing more damage than doing good.

Let us try to understand this with the help of few statistics. According to National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Nearly 88,000 people (approximately 62,000 men and 26,000 women) died from alcohol related causes annually, making it the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States. In 2013, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 10,076 deaths (30.8 percent of overall driving fatalities). In 2006, alcohol misuse problems cost the United States \$223.5 billion. Almost three quarters of the total cost of alcohol misuse is related to binge drinking. More than 10 percent of U.S. children live with a parent with alcohol problems, according to a 2012 study.

1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes. 6,96,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who had been drinking. 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report experiencing alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape. Roughly 20 percent of college students meet the criteria for an AUD. About 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class,

falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.

In 2012, 3.3 million deaths, or 5.9 percent of all global deaths (7.6 percent for men and 4.0 percent for women), were attributable to alcohol consumption. Alcohol contributes to over 200 diseases and injury-related health conditions, most notably alcohol dependence, liver cirrhosis, cancers, and injuries. In 2012, 5.1 percent of the burden of disease and injury worldwide (139 million disability adjusted life years) was attributable to alcohol consumption. Globally, alcohol misuse is the fifth leading risk factor for premature death and disability; among people between the ages of 15 and 49, it is the first. Thus, taking all this aspects into consideration, we can conclude that alcohol causes more damage than good to the individual and the society at large.

9. Prohibition of Interest

Islam discourages people to indulge in any kind of interest. Allah (swt) strongly discourages people to deal with interest. Allah (swt) says in the Quran, "O you who have believed, do not consume interest, doubled and multiplied, but fear Allah that you may be successful. And fear the fire, which has been prepared for the disbelievers" (Quran 3:130-131). Allah (swt) also says in the Quran, "And whatever you give for interest to increase within the wealth of people will not increase with Allah. But what you give in zakah, desiring the countenance of Allah - those are the multipliers" (Quran 30:39). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has also strictly prohibited the dealing with interest by saying, "Interest has seventy

parts, the least important being that a man should marry his mother" (Tirmidhi).

The following are few reasons why Islam discourages interest:

i. Concentrates wealth in the hands of a small minority

Interest is a low-risk way to increase wealth if you already have wealth, these functions to concentrate wealth into the hands of a minority, which has potentially socially destructive effects.

For example, we are the 99%, is a political slogan widely used and coined by the Occupy movement. It was the name of a Tumblr blog page launched in late August 2011 and is a variation on the phrase "We The 99%" from an August 2011 flyer for the NYC General Assembly. A related statistic, the 1%, refers to the top 1% wealthiest people in society that have a disproportionate share of capital, political influence, and the means of production. The phrase directly refers to the income and wealth inequality in the United States with a concentration of wealth among the top earning 1%. It reflects an opinion that the "99%" are paying the price for the mistakes of a tiny minority within the upper class.

ii. Introduces instability into the economic system

If people are lending money to others, but it is untied to a physical resource and based on the expectation that not everyone will try to get back their liquid assets at the same time, the so called liquidity ratio which allows banks to not have to hold all of the money they have lent in liquid form. Thus, interest can

introduce financial instability into the economic system.

For example, the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo once said, "All that we had borrowed upto 1985 or 1986 was around \$5 billion and we have paid out about \$16 yet we are still told that we owe about \$28 billion. That \$28 billion came about because of the injustice in the foreign creditors' interest rate. If you ask me what the worst thing in the world is, I will say it is Compound Interest." It seems unbelievable but sadly it's typical. Developing countries start off with relatively small loans and remain saddles with huge amount of growing debts for generations. This could be Nigeria or any other poor country. To give just another one example during the year 1997 Asian collapse Indonesian's foreign debt as a percentage of GDP was over 60%, so Nigeria is not an isolated example. There are many more countries that are in debt, to name a few Angola, Cameroon, Kenya & Vietnam.

It is no secret that all the nations of the world, including the developed countries, are drowning in national and foreign debts to the extent that the amount of payable debts in a large number of countries exceeds their total income.

An another example, the financial crisis of 2007–08, also known as the global financial crisis and the 2008 financial crisis, is considered by many economists to have been the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is also known as the 'financial housing bubble'. Banks became greedy and wanted to earn more money through interest by lending money to people. The situation reached such a state where many people were

not able to pay back the loan which led to selling of the houses. But the bigger problem was that there was more supply than the demand which reduced the price of real estate and it went on to affect everybody as their value of their houses fell down. This clearly shows how interest can cause instability in the economic system.

iii. Cause overconsumption that later can be life-destroying

If people are given the option of borrowing against future earnings without knowing what those future earnings are, people may overconsume. The lives of large number of families have been destroyed as the earning member of the family has committed suicide.

Interest is also one of the major reasons of farmer's suicide in India. In 2014, the National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 5,650 farmer suicides. The highest numbers of farmer suicides were recorded in 2004 when 18,241 farmers committed suicide. The farmer's suicide rate in India has ranged between 1.4 to 1.8 per 1,00,000 of the total population, over a 10 year period through 2005. Generally farmers take loan to purchase seeds, pesticides, tools and machinery which are required for farming and later fail to pay back due to the high compounded interest, which ultimately leads them to committing suicide.

An another example, Unicef (United Nations Children's Fund), an International Organisation, estimates that around 500,000 children under the age of 5 die each year as a result of debt crisis. But as we have seen it's not the debt which is the problem, it's the compounding interest. Ken Livingston, the Mayor of London, claimed that global capitalism kills more

people each year than killed by Adolf Hitler. He blamed the IMF and World Bank for deaths of millions due to their refusal to ease the debt burden. Susan George stated that every year since 1981 between 15 and 20 million people died unnecessarily due to debt burden "because third world governments have had to cut back on clean water and health programmes to meet their repayments".

There is no question that when looked at from an international perspective, interest kills people. The debt servicing of most of the countries today is so high that they must sacrifice essential health and nutritional needs. It is dumb-founding to think that untold numbers of children are dying daily in lesser-developed countries due to the interest burden. Many governments are forced to spend more on debt servicing than they spend on health or education.

iv. Increases the cost of living

When a person runs his business on the basis of interest, he sells his product at a higher rate as he needs to get back his money along with the interest which he has to pay to the bank, which ultimately increases the cost of the product.

For example, a factory which makes fertilizers takes a loan of Rs. 2 crores to start the factory, so in the first stage the interest amount was included in the manufacturing cost. Then they opened inventory rooms, so in the second stage the banker collected its interest. In the fertilizing industry gas is used, the gas industry is also working on interest thus at the third stage the banker collects its interest. The factory also needs fuel or power to run the factory, as even this industry runs on interest the banker collects its interest

at the fourth stage. The employees especially the management side, working in the factory is given many benefits like luxury cars, house, electronic items all this is on lease by this the banker collects loan at the first stage. The gunny bags which carry the fertilizer is been out sourced to another factory which runs on loan, by this the banker collects interest at the sixth stage. When the fertilizer is transported to the market again the banker collects interest at the seventh stage from the transporter and his vehicles are purchased on loan.

Now if we take into consideration the whole seller and the retailer then many things will be included, thus we will skip the whole seller and the retailer and take the fertilizer to the farmer. Please note that till now only one need of the farmer is satisfied and that is the fertilizer. Now the farmer needs pesticides', seeds, tractor, fuel, tube well and some other harvesting equipments. So there are 7 commodities which a farmer requires and in this all the commodities are going through the same process.

So if we multiply 7 with 7 then it is after 49 times of interest the cotton are produced. Now this cotton will be transported to the ginning factory. The ginning factory has also taken loan so another level of interest gets added at this stage. From the ginning factory it goes to the textile sector. In the textile sector it will have 4 to 5 processes; spinning will happen, cloth will be made, finishing, dying and printing. After this again it has to be transported and then come to the market. Then again interest will be collected in another 6 levels. So after paying interest at 55 levels we are wearing our clothes.

If we assume that the interest rate is 10% then it means that we have paid 550% of interest only on our clothes and only one need is satisfied, we still need wheat, water, sugar, salt, medicine, stationary, vehicle, fuel and power. These are the 10 basic necessities which we need. If we multiply this 550 by 10 then we get 5500. This 5500% of interest is a burden on even the poorest person in the society. As the interest amount is included in the cost price, the selling price increases. And at the end it is you and me, the final consumers who are paying for it.

10. Prohibition of Homosexuality

According to Islam, homosexuality is sin. Islam only encourages physical relationships between man and woman only after marriage. From history we can learn that the people of Prophet Loot (as) indulged in the act of homosexuality and later God destroyed them. God says in the Quran, "Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people" (Quran 7:81).

Homosexuality is a very dangerous act and has a number of ill effects on the society. A major problem relative to homosexuality is that many venereal and other diseases are far more a problem with homosexual behaviour than heterosexual. For non-promiscuous couples who take proper cleanliness measures, the transmission of disease among heterosexuals is extremely rare, and only happens almost always due to lack of hygiene. During homosexual behaviour, sperm can penetrate the partner's colon wall. When inside the body, the sperm adversely affects the immune system, resulting in the person being more vulnerable to disease. This is especially a problem, as these

homosexual practices commonly transmit many diseases which are uncommon among heterosexuals.

For example, homosexuals as a group are far more apt to have rare bowel diseases, which are generally lumped together under the designation 'gay bowel syndrome'. One study indicated that one half of homosexuals eventually contract the colon disease parasitic amebiasis, while rectal gonorrhea and infectious hepatitis A are far higher among the homosexual population. Fox, in response to this concern, noted, 'First, the colon and rectum are made for the elimination of fecal matter and not for sexual experience. Fecal matter is eliminated because it is indigestible and contains disease-causing materials. With sexual penetration, the rectal muscles are often torn or over-expanded, and the fragile lining of the colon is almost always torn. The tearing of the colon allows fecal matter to penetrate into the body, bringing with it infectious disease'.

Estimates of the infectious disease rate among homosexuals is about ten times higher than that of the general population—not only venereal diseases, but also hepatitis B and others. Other common diseases include AIDS, urethritis, viral herpes, pediculosis infestation and others. Of course, it is not only the type of behaviour that they indulge in which puts them at a much higher risk, but also their high level of promiscuity—one survey indicated that homosexual males have an average of over 50 sexual partners in their lifetime. Another study found that 28% had more than 1,000 partners, 15% had 500 to 1,000, 32% from 100 to 500, and only 25% had less than 100 partners in their lifetime. While surveys in this area vary, depending upon the sampling population, sample size

and specific questions asked, all reveal that an enormous amount of promiscuity is a normal part of the gay lifestyle.

From a medical standpoint, they are fraught with health dangers, including infections, bleeding and disease transmission problems. While promiscuity among heterosexuals also carries many dangers, they are generally far less than sodomy, and infections from sexual relations are actually relatively rare in monogamous couples who practice appropriate hygiene.

A major reason why this is true is that numerous genital secretions produce high levels of germicides which minimise enormously the chances of infection from heterosexual relations. On the other hand, no such secretions are produced for sodomy relations, which would be expected if heterosexual behaviour were designed and sodomy were not (meaning it is biologically wrong and God did not create us that way). Consequently, studies reveal that homosexual behaviour produces a rate of venereal disease 22 times higher than the average. The major anatomical problems with sodomy (for example, tearing of mucosa) are generally not a problem in heterosexual relationships.

Let's say for the sake of argument that all gays start to go into monogamous relationships (which is highly unlikely as statistics have shown) after their rights are recognised and they have the right to marry and get divorced. A number of problems will arise in a society due to this scenario in the years to come.

Firstly, it is estimated that gays outnumber Lesbians in the ratio of four to one, i.e., for every four gays there is one lesbian. This means that millions of

women all over the world will never find a partner for themselves. Secondly, in many societies the population growth will start to slow down and go into negative (which the west is facing now because people are not willing to marry because of unfair divorce laws or have more than two children as more and more women are going into the workforce, and therefore, they are unable to take care of a lot of children, and hence many countries like Australia and Canada have relaxed their immigration laws so that their population can grow steadily and the skill shortages are minimised.

Basically, till date there is no solid scientific evidence that people are born homosexuals. The argument of homosexuality is illogical and self-destructive, if everyone becomes homosexual, then the human race will cease to exist in 150 years. If you argue that people can artificially inseminate and produce babies to keep the population going, then you have to realise that the population growth will be negative which will result in all sorts of problems (such as lack of skill shortages in many fields). All in All, God did not design human beings to be homosexuals. It is a lifestyle which many adopt because of external factors. This confirms that revelation guides people in the right path and if humans turn away from it, they eventually learn it through their intelligence (but this learning comes at a much higher cost).

Reliability only on Rationalism

History has shown that rationalism cannot be correct all the time due to the various limitations it has to offer. Let us try to understand this with the help of certain examples:

1. In earlier times, people out of their rational thinking believed that the earth was flat. This is an idea that is fully accepted by most people, but it was not always held with such certainty. While it is a misconception to think that most people believed in a flat earth well into the early modern period, it was certainly a commonly held belief in early Chinese thought. For centuries, men were afraid to venture out too far, for the fear of falling off the edge. People began to believe that the earth is spherical only when it was proved by Sir Francis Drake in the year 1597.
2. Through rational thinking, it was believed by the earlier civilization that the moon emanates its own light. But now Science tells us that the light of the moon is reflected light.
3. Geocentricity is the concept which states that the earth is the centre of the Universe and that all other objects move around it. The view was universally embraced in Ancient Greece and very similar ideas were held in Ancient China. The idea was supported by the fact that the sun, stars, and planets appear to revolve around the Earth, and the physical perception that the Earth is stable and not moving. This was combined with the belief that the earth was a sphere; belief in a flat earth was

well gone by the 3rd century BC. The geocentric model was eventually displaced with the work of Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler in the 16th Century. But later, the development of science proved that the sun is motionless at the centre of the solar system with the planets revolving around it.

4. Earlier, people believed that the space outside organized astronomical systems was earlier assumed to be a vacuum. Astrophysicists later discovered the presence of bridges of matter in this interstellar space.
5. In ancient times a well-known theory by the name of 'Theory of Atomism' was widely accepted. The word atom is derived from a Greek term meaning something that cannot be divided, and therefore reckoned to be the smallest particle possible. It was undoubtedly strange, going against the widely accepted notion that all things were made up of the four elements, earth, wind, water, and fire. The likes of Leucippus and Democritus held that all things had the same building blocks, which were simply rearranged to form different objects. Democritus and the people that came after him assumed that the smallest unit of matter was the atom. The ancient Arabs used to believe the same. While it took centuries for the scientific community to prove the idea, it is now a corner stone of scientific thought. But in recent times modern science has discovered that it is possible to split even an atom.

What we need to understand is that describing the world through reasoning is not reliable, as they may be based on human misconceptions, otherwise scientists

would not conduct experiments and just rely on logical arguments. From the above mentioned points we can learn that, only using a rational approach would be very dangerous. Man should remember that God has not blessed him with complete knowledge of everything and his knowledge is only limited to an extent. Thus, one needs to take the help of other sources of knowledge, especially the guidance and knowledge from God before coming to any conclusion.

Conclusion

The method used by the Quran to train human beings is that of inductive method, i.e., the process of deriving general principles of life by using logic, reason and facts. According to the Quran, there are four sources of human knowledge through which eternal truth can be derived, and they are reason, experience, study of nature and history. At the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), when the Quran was being revealed no one asked to prove the beliefs and actions rationally because many people at that time believed the Quran to be the word of God. Not only the Muslims but also the non-Muslims believed it to be the word of God but they did not follow it because of their ego.

With respect to rationalism, we find two kinds of people. The first category of people is those who do not believe in rationalism and they only rely on the commands from their religion and they want to follow it blindly. The second category of people are the ones who base their beliefs and actions only on rationality, if any aspect of their life does not have a rational explanation, they would not accept it. Both these opinions are dangerous, and one needs to adopt the middle path to lead a comprehensive life. Jostein Gaarder has rightly said, "Then you have a big problem, because a human is a thinking animal. If you don't think, you're not really a human".

Let us try to understand the concept of rationalism from our daily lives. Every human being takes many crucial decisions in his life and whenever he takes this

decision, he does think rationally before taking the decision. For example, when a student is taking a decision to select a particular course, he thinks rationally, when a person is selecting a job, he thinks rationally, when a person is getting married, he thinks rationally, when a person is purchasing something, he thinks rationally, thus why should one not think rationally with respect to religion? The other thing that needs to be understood is that, when God has given us a brain and given us the ability to reason, then why should man not be rational. Once Galileo Galilei has also rightly said, "I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with senses, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use".

Actually Satan does not want man to think, because if man starts thinking rationally, he will get closer to truth. The biggest problem is that man thinks rationally only about the world but fails to think rationally about various aspects of religion, especially life after death. Thus, rational thinking will help a person to get closer to the truth and help him understand the purpose of life.

Among all the religions, Islam is the most rational religion on the face of the earth. No other religion on the face of the earth can stand the test of rationalism, the way Islam can. On the other hand, Muslims do not wait for a rational answer or argument before implementing or following anything. They only follow them because it is the commandment from God. As God says in the Quran, "...And they say, "We hear and we obey..." (Quran 2:285).

The creator of the pen will decide the role and purpose of the pen. The creator of a tool will decide

the role and purpose of the tool. The creator a mobile phone will decide the role and purpose of the phone and for better functioning it will also provide the customer with certain guidelines, as the creator (manufacturer) will be in the best position to guide, as to how it should be used. Similarly, the creator of human beings, who is God, knows what is good and bad for the human beings and thus he has given them instructions in the Quran so that they can follow them and be happy in the world and in the hereafter.

One should also know that Islam is a natural religion as the belief and teachings of Islam are based on the nature of every human being. Islam does not prohibit or permit anything without any logic unless it has a strong reasoning behind it. If a person without any bias tries to seek the truth, then he will realise that Islam is the truth. God adopts various means to show his signs to people, as God says in the Quran, "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (Quran 41:53).

Some medieval critics of Christianity such as Peter Bayle and Henry Stubbe defended Islam as a faith closer to reason than the Catholic Church. They praised the simplicity of Islamic faith against the complexities of Christian theology and rituals and admired the advanced state of Islamic civilization.

All these rational explanations which I have mentioned in the book did not exist 100 years back, all this is a result of recent researches which were done across the globe. As time passes and as science progresses there will be many more rational arguments

which are going to come forward in support of the various beliefs, principles and actions of Islam.

One should always strive to gain complete knowledge on any aspect before coming to any conclusion. As Stephen Hawking has rightly said, "The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance; it is the illusion of knowledge". Thus, this book is an effort to impart knowledge to people on various issues.

